In the Name of Allah,
the All-beneficent, the All-merciful

قال الله تعالي:

﴿ إِنَّمَا يُرِيدُ ٱللَّهُ لِيُذۡهِبَ عَنكُمُ ٱلرِّجۡسَ أَهۡلَ ٱلۡبَيۡتِ وَيُطَهِّرَكُمۡ تَطۡهِيرًا ﴾

Indeed Allah desires to repel all impurity from you, O People of the Household, and purify you with a thorough purification.

(*Sūrah al-Aḥzāb* 33:33).

Prophetic traditions mentioned in both in Sunnī and Shīʿah authoritative reference books of *ḥadīth* and *tafsīr* (exegesis of the Qur'ān) have confirmed that this holy verse was revealed to exclusively refer to the People of the Cloak [*ahl al-kisā'*], viz. Muḥammad, ʿAlī, Fāṭimah, al-Ḥasan, and al-Ḥusayn (ʿa) as the *Ahl al-Bayt* (People of the Household). For instance, refer to the following references:

Sunnī: Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal (d. 241 AH), *al-Musnad*, 1:231; 4:107; 6:292, 304; *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* (d. 261 AH), 7:130; Al-Tirmidhī (d. 279 AH), *Sunan*, 5:361 et al.; Al-Dūlābī (d. 310 AH), *Al-Dhuriyyah al-Ṭāhirah al-Nabawiyyah*, p. 108; Al-Nasā'ī (d. 303 AH), *Al-Sunan al-Kubrā*, 5:108; 113; Al-Ḥakīm al-Nayshābūrī (d. 405 AH), *Al-Mustadrak ʿalā al-Ṣaḥīḥāyn*, 2:416, 3:133, 146-147; Al-Zarkashī (d. 794 AH), *Al-Burhān*, p. 197; Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī (d. 852 AH), *Fatḥ al-Barī Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, 7:104.

Shīʿah: Al-Kulaynī (d. 328 AH), *Uṣūl al-Kāfī*, 1:287; Ibn Bābawayh (d. 329 AH), *Al-Imāmah wa'l-Tabṣīrah*, p. 47, *ḥadīth* 29; Al-Maghribī (d. 363 AH), *Daʿā'im al-Islām*, pp. 35, 37; Al-Ṣadūq (d. 381 AH), *Al-Khiṣāl*, pp. 403, 550; Al-Ṭūsī (d. 460 AH), *Al-Amālī*, *ḥadīth* 438, 482, 783.

For more details, refer to the exegesis of the holy verse recorded in the following books of *tafsīr*: Al-Jaṣṣāṣ (d. 370 AH), *Aḥkām al-Qur'ān*; Al-Wāḥidī (d. 468 AH), *Asbāb al-Nuzūl*; Ibn al-Jawzī (d. 597 AH), *Zād al-Masīr*; Al-Qurṭubī (d. 671 AH), *Al-Jāmiʿ li-Aḥkām al-Qur'ān*; Ibn Kathīr (d. 774 AH), *Tafsīr*; Al-Thaʿlabī (d. 825 AH), *Tafsīr*; Al-Ṭabarī (d. 875 AH), *Tafsīr*; Al-Suyūṭī (d. 911 AH), *Al-Durr al-Manthūr*; Al-Shawkānī (d. 1250 AH), *Fatḥ al-Qadīr*; Al-ʿAyyāshī (d. 320 AH), *Tafsīr*; Al-Qummī (d. 329 AH), *Tafsīr*; Furāt al-Kūfī (d. 352 AH), *Tafsīr* at the margin of the exegesis of *Sūrat al-Nisā'*, verse 59; Al-Ṭabarsī (d. 560 AH), *Majmaʿ al-Bayān*, as well as many other sources.

HISTORY OF THE HOLY QUR'ĀN

قال رسول الله ﷺ:

إِنِّي تَارِكٌ فِيكُمُ الثَّقَلَيْنِ: كِتَابَ اللهِ، وَعِتْرَتِي أَهْلَ بَيْتِي، مَا إِنْ تَمَسَّكْتُمْ بِهِمَا لَنْ تَضِلُّوا أَبَداً وَأَنَّهُمَا لَنْ يَفْتَرِقَا حَتَّى يَرِدَا عَلَيَّ الْحَوْضَ.

The Messenger of Allah (*ṣ*) said: "Verily, I am leaving among you two precious things [*thaqalayn*]: The Book of Allah and my progeny [*ʿitratī*], the members of my Household [*Ahl al-Bayt*]. If you hold fast to them, you shall never go astray. These two will never separate from each other until they meet me at the Pond [*ḥawḍ*] (of *Kawthar*)."

Some references:

- Al-Ḥākim an-Nayshābūrī, *Al-Mustadrak ʿalā al-Ṣaḥīḥayn* (Beirut), vol. 3, pp. 109-110, 148, 533
- Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, (English version), book 31, *ḥadīth*s 5920-3.
- Al-Tirmidhī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, vol. 5, pp. 621-2, *ḥadīth*s 3786, 3788; vol. 2, p. 219
- Al-Nasāʾī, *Khaṣāʾiṣ ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib*, *ḥadīth* 79
- Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, *Al-Musnad*, vol. 3, pp. 14, 17, 26; vol. 3, pp. 26, 59; vol. 4, p. 371; vol. 5, pp. 181-182, 189-190
- Ibn al-Athīr, *Jāmiʿ al-Uṣūl*, vol. 1, p. 277
- Ibn Kathīr, *Al-Bidāyah wa'l-Nihāyah*, vol. 5, p. 209
- Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-ʿAẓīm*, vol. 6, p. 199
- Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Albānī, *Silsilāt al-Aḥādīth al-Ṣaḥīḥah* (Kuwait: Al-Dār al-Salafiyyah), vol. 4, pp. 355-358.

HISTORY OF THE HOLY QUR'ĀN

AYATOLLAH
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PREFACE

The invaluable legacy of the Household [*Ahl al-Bayt*] of the Prophet (may peace be upon them all), as preserved by their followers, is a comprehensive school of thought that embraces all branches of Islamic knowledge. This school has produced many brilliant scholars who have drawn inspiration from this rich and pure resource. It has provided the Muslim community (*ummah*) with many scholars whom, following in the footsteps of the Holy Imams of the Prophet's Household (*ʿa*), have done their best to clear up the doubts raised by various creeds and currents within and without Muslim society and to answer their questions. Throughout the past centuries, they have given well-reasoned answers and clarifications concerning these questions and doubts.

To meet the responsibilities assigned to it, the Ahl al-Bayt World Assembly (ABWA) has embarked on a defense of the sanctity of the Islamic message and its verities, often obscured by the partisans of various sects and creeds as well as by currents hostile to Islam. The Assembly follows in the footsteps of the *Ahl al-Bayt* (ʿa) and the disciples of their school of thought in its readiness to confront these challenges and tries to be on the frontline in consonance with the demands of every age.

The arguments contained in the works of the scholars belonging to the School of the *Ahl al-Bayt* (ʿa) are of unique significance. That is because they are based on genuine scholarship and appeal to reason, and avoid prejudice and bias. These arguments address scholars and thinkers in a manner that appeals to healthy minds and wholesome human nature.

To assist the seekers of truth, the Ahl al-Bayt World Assembly has endeavored to present a new phase of these arguments contained in the studies and translations of the works of contemporary Shīʿah writers and those who have embraced this sublime school of thought through divine blessing.

The Assembly is also engaged in editing and publishing valuable works by leading Shīʿah scholars of earlier ages to assist the seekers of the truth in discovering the truths which the School of the Prophet's Household (ʿa) has offered to the entire world.

The Ahl al-Bayt World Assembly looks forward to benefitting from the

opinions of the readers and their suggestions and constructive criticism in this area.

We also invite scholars, translators and other institutions to assist us in propagating the genuine Islamic teachings as preached by the Prophet Muḥammad (ṣ).

We beseech Allah, the Most High, to accept our humble efforts and to enable us to enhance them under the auspices of Imam al-Mahdī, His vicegerent on the earth (may Allah expedite his advent).

We express our gratitude to Ayatollah Muḥammad Hādī Maʿrifat the author of the present book, Agha ʻAlī Reza Razavi, its translator. We also thank our colleagues who have participated in producing this work, especially the staff of the Translation Office.

Cultural Affairs Department
The Ahl al-Bayt (ʿa) World Assembly

INTRODUCTION

The Holy Qur'ān is the only divine manuscript known to man that has successfully survived its arduous journey throughout history, while accurately maintaining its original form. It has travelled across the centuries without even an iota of change, and has managed to preserve and protect itself against the unforgiving assaults of numerous enemies, chief amongst them being *'time'* itself. As God declares in the Holy Qur'ān:

﴿ إِنَّا نَحْنُ نَزَّلْنَا ٱلذِّكْرَ وَإِنَّا لَهُۥ لَحَٰفِظُونَ ﴾

"Surely We have revealed the Reminder and We will most surely be its guardian."[1]

This heavenly text was gradually revealed unto the Holy Prophet Muḥammad (ṣ)[2], in a continual but dispersed manner, throughout his prophetic mission. God would communicate with His Messenger (ṣ) periodically, revealing to him the various verses of the Holy Qur'ān. The Prophet (ṣ) would recite these heavenly messages, word for word, to a select group of scribes so that the exact contents of divine revelation could be recorded immediately. The purpose behind this meticulous effort was to preserve these priceless words for posterity. Later on, under direct supervision of the Holy Prophet (ṣ), these written records, which had existed until then as solitary and scattered *Āyāt* (or verses), were collected and arranged into *Suwar* (or chapters). This resulting compilation of chapters, which are one hundred and fourteen in total, is known as the *Muṣḥaf*[3] (or the Codex).

How did this message reach humanity? When and where was it revealed? Under whose direction was it collected and compiled? Was this compilation done at one time, or was it performed over an extended period? What proportion of this work took place during the lifetime of the Holy Prophet (ṣ)

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1. The Holy Qur'ān, Al-Ḥijr (15:09).
2. *"May God bestow peace upon him and his progeny"*
3. *"Muṣḥaf"* (from the root *ṣ-ḥ-f*), literally meaning "codex", is a book, arranged in the format used for modern books, with separate pages bound together within a single cover. Taken literally, it would mean any book, but the word had become popular amongst the Muslim as a name for the Holy Qur'ān and, thus, became synonymous to it. Henceforth, the words "codex" will be used in this translation for *"Muṣḥaf."*

himself, and how much of it took place after his demise? Who were the primary agents responsible for this compilation? What paths did this message follow, through the corridors of time, before it finally reached us? All these questions, or rather, the answers related to them, form the content of this current text.

Probably the most important of the numerous reasons necessitating an in-depth study of the Holy Qur'ān's history is the fact that this remarkable book has formed in the past, as it does today, the very foundations of a great nation. A nation comprised of an abundant diversity of ethnic denominations, all hailing from separate and distinct, but nevertheless rich, historic and cultural backgrounds. The centrality of the Holy Qur'ān has transformed this grand collection of peoples and nations into one coherent singularity. This divine message has united these various tribes, under its radiant banner, into one new vibrant nation.

It is, therefore, of extreme importance that the history of this heavenly message be made evident and available for all to study. If this is achieved, the essential reason behind the successful preservation of this book's purity, during the many centuries which have passed since its revelation, will also be made apparent; a purity that exists in stark contrast to other divine texts[1], all of which have unfortunately fallen prey to distortions, manipulations, adulterations and malicious alterations.

The Holy Qur'ān is, in fact, the sacred constitution of Islam, and forms the steadfast foundation of a single true Islamic national identity. For this very reason, it is necessary that the Holy Qur'ān's message be made known to the world and light be shed upon its history. Similarly, it is extremely necessary that we clarify the various phases and transformations that have personified this book's historical journey through time.

In the first few centuries of Islamic history, we find several useful books written on a subject called the "Recognition (or Knowledge) of the Holy Qur'ān"[2]. These classical books primarily dealt with describing the first

1. Translator's Note: By "other divine texts", the author refers to books revealed by God to humanity before the advent of the Holy Qur'ān. These include the "Psalms" revealed onto David, the "Torah" revealed onto Moses and the "Gospel" or "Bible" revealed onto Jesus, the son of Mary. None of these books exist today in the shape and form in which they were originally revealed by God onto his blessed prophets.

2. It must be noted that the phrase "History of the Holy Qur'ān" is relatively new, having been adopted as a title for this particular field of study only during the last one hundred years. However, when we refer to classical texts dealing with the same subject matter, we are confronted with the title "Recognition (or Knowledge) of the Holy Qur'ān" as the label commonly used to refer to such discussions.

Maṣāḥif (or codices of the Holy Qur'ān available during the earlier periods of Islamic history). For this very reason, they were commonly known as *"Al-Maṣāḥif."* Here we shall list some of the most important of these works.

1. *Ikhtilāf Maṣāḥif al-Shām wa'l-Ḥijāz wa'l-ʿIrāq"* (Differences in the Codices of *Shām*, *Ḥijāz* and Iraq) by *ʿAbdullāh ibn ʿĀmir*. The said author, a *Shāmī*[1], was in his lifetime a renowned reciter of the Holy Qur'ān. He is counted amongst the *al-Qurrā' al-Sabʿah*[2]. Ibn ʿĀmir passed away in the year 118 A.H.[3]

2. *Ikhtilāf Maṣāḥif Ahl al-Madīnah wa-Ahl al-Kūfah wa-Ahl al-Baṣrah* (Differences in the Codices of the People of al-Madīnah, the People of al-Kūfah and the People of al-Baṣrah) by *ʿAlī ibn Ḥamzah al-Kisā'ī*. He, a famous *Kūfī*[4] reciter of the Holy Qur'ān, is also considered as one of the seven principle reciters. He passed away in the year 189 A.H.

3. *Ikhtilāf Ahl al-Kūfah wa'l-Baṣrah wa'l-Shām*; (Differences Amongst the People of al-Kūfah, al-Baṣrah and Sham) by Yaḥyā ibn Ziyād. He was more commonly known by the title of *al-Farrā' al-Baghdādī*. He died in the year 207 A.H.

4. *Ikhtilāf al-Maṣāḥif* (Differences in the Codices) by Khalaf ibn Hishām. He, a reciter of the Holy Qur'ān from the city of Baghdad, is one of narrators and followers of the recitational style of Ḥamzah ibn Ḥabīb al-Zayyāt.[5] Khalaf ibn Hishām is also one of the *al-Qurrā al-ʿAsharah*[6]. He passed away in the year 229 A.H.

5. *Ikhtilāf al-Maṣāḥif wa-Jāmiʿ al-Qirā'āt* (Differences in the Codices and a Collection of the Recitations) by al-Madā'inī. He passed away in the year 231 A.H.

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1. *Shām* was the name of historical Syria, an area that included present day Syria, Jordan, Palestine and parts of Lebanon. *Shāmī*, herein, means a citizen of *Shām*.
2. *Al-Qurrā' al-Sabʿah*, literally meaning "the seven reciters", is a term used to signify the seven principle reciters chosen by Ibn Mujāhid as authentic, based on criteria that shall be discussed, God willing, in chapters to come.
3. A.H. means After Hegira, i.e. after the migration of the Holy Prophet (ṣ) from Mecca to Medina. The Islamic Calendar marks its beginning from this historic event.
4. *Al-Kūfah* (Kufa) is the name of a city in Southern Iraq. *Kūfī*, herein, means a citizen of Kufa.
5. Ḥamzah ibn Ḥabīb is one of the seven principle reciters.
6. *Al-Qurrā' al-ʿAsharah*, literally meaning "the ten reciters", is a term used to signify another grouping from amongst the classical reciters of the Holy Qur'ān. This classification includes three additional reciters other than the seven principle ones.

6. *Ikhtilāf al-Maṣāḥif* (Differences in the Codices) by Abū-Ḥātim. He died in the year 248 A.H.

7. *Al-Maṣāḥif* (the Codices) by ʿAbdullāh ibn Abī-Dāwūd al-Sajistānī. The said author passed away in the year 316 A.H.

8. *Al-Maṣāḥif* (the Codices) by Ibn al-Anbārī, who died 327 A.H.

9. *Al-Maṣāḥif* (the Codices) by Ibn al-Ashtah al-Iṣfahānī, who died in the year 360 A.H.

10. *Gharīb al-Maṣāḥif* (The Rarities in the Codices) by al-Warrāq.

Of all the books listed above, the only one available to us today, is *Al-Maṣāḥif* (the Codices) by Ibn Abī-Dāwūd. Ibn Abī-Dāwūd was born in Sīstān in the year 230 A.H. and was raised in the city of Nayshāpūr. In his youth, he travelled widely and visited Khurāsān, Iṣfahān, Fars, al-Baṣrah, Baghdad, al-Kūfah, al-Madīnah, Makkah, Damascus, Egypt, Algeria and other Islamic lands, to seek knowledge and learn the sciences of the day. His book is one example of many such books, penned by various authors, about the history of the Holy Qur'ān. For many years, this text remained beyond our reach, until finally Dr. Arthur Jeffery, the renowned Orientalist and Islamologist, managed to rediscover this priceless manuscript and, subsequently, provided for its re-publication. As a result, this book is now available for scholars and the public alike. This book is considered the best and the oldest written document available in the said discipline and field of study.

In contemporary times, numerous new writings dealing with this particular subject matter have come to light. The most authoritative of such books is *Tārīkh al*-Qur'ān (History of the Holy Qur'ān) authored by the learned researcher Abū-ʿAbdullāh al-Zanjānī. He was part of the *al-Majmaʿ al-ʿIlmī al-ʿArabī* (Arab Academic Assembly) in Damascus and was also one of the great scholars, writers and jurisprudents of the Holy Seminary at Najaf. Recently, this invaluable book has been translated into Persian and become available to the Iranian public. Another important book is the one entitled *Lamaḥāt min Tārīkh Al-Qur'ān* (An Overiew of the History of the Holy Qur'ān) by the honorable teacher Sayyid Muḥammad ʿAlī Ashīqir. The said writer was from amongst the famous scholars of the holy city of Karbalā'. Other useful books include *Tārīkh Al-Qur'ān* (History of the Holy Qur'ān) by Dr. Maḥmūd Ramyar, *Buḥūthun fī Tārīkh al-Qur'ān wa ʿUlūmihī* (Discussions on the History of the Holy Qur'ān and its Sciences) by Sayyid Abu'l-Faḍl Mīr-Muḥammadī, and *Tārīkh Al-Qur'ān* (History of the Holy Qur'ān) by Dr. Sayyid Muḥammad Bāqir Ḥujjatī. The above listed books are considered the most respected scholarly works produced on the given subject

matter in contemporary times.

In the present era, Shīʿah and Sunni researchers have written numerous other books on topics related to the Holy Qur'ān. This, in itself, is a profound indicator of the extraordinary level of attention enjoyed by this divine book within Muslim society. Herein, we shall name some of these contemporary works:

- *Tārīkh al-Qur'ān wa'l-Tafsīr* (History of the Holy Qur'ān and Exegesis) by the Egyptian author Dr. ʿAbdullāh Maḥmūd Shaḥātah.
- *Tārīkh al-Qur'ān wa-Gharā'ibi Rasmihī* (History of the Holy Qur'ān and the Rarities of its Script) by the Egyptian writer Muḥammad Ṭāhir.
- *Tārīkh Al-Qur'ān* (History of the Holy Qur'ān) by Dr. ʿAbd al-Ṣabūr Shāhīn.
- *Tārīkh Al-Qur'ān* (History of the Holy Qur'ān) by the author of *al-Mawsūʿah al-Qur'āniyyah* (Encyclopedia of the Holy Qur'ān); Ibrāhīm al-Abyārī.
- *Tārīkh Al-Qur'ān wa'l-Maṣāḥif* (History of the Holy Qur'ān and The Codices) by Mūsā Jārullāh Rostofduni.
- *Min Qaḍāya al-Qur'ān, Naẓmuhū, Jamʿuhū wa-Tartībuhū* (Upon the Issues Related to the Qur'ān, its Sequence, its Collection and its Compilation) by the Egyptian exegete ʿAbd al-Karīm al-Khaṭīb.
- *Tārīkh wa-ʿulūm-e-Qur'ānī* (The History of, and the Sciences Related to, the Holy Qur'ān) by ʿAlī Ḥujjatī Kirmānī.
- *Tārīkh-e-Jāmiʿ Qur'ān* (The History of the Collection and Compilation of the Holy Qur'ān) by Muḥammad Riḍā Jalālī Nā'īnī.[1]

Likewise, the author of this present book also holds the privilege of having written two other similar works upon topics related to the Holy Qur'ān. These texts may prove useful to readers interested in further study. The first of these two books is called *al-Tamhīd* (The Introduction). This work is, in fact, the culmination of thirty years of research on topics related to the Holy Qur'ān. It was written to present the various opinions of the Imāmiyyah[2]

1. Orientalists, too, have written many books about the Holy Qur'ān. A few of such works have also been translated into Persian. An example is the book called ***History of the Holy Qur'ān***. Mr. Maḥmūd Ramyar has arranged for the publication of this text under the title ***Dar Āstāne-ye-Qur'ān*** (In the Presence of the Holy Qur'ān).
2. Imāmiyyah is another name for the Shīʿah school of Islamic thought.

scholars regarding discussions related to this subject. It comprises of seven volumes in which we have explored all the different dimensions of this field of study, amongst them a detailed discussion of the Holy Qur'ān's history. It has already been translated into Persian.

The second of the two is a book entitled *Al-Tafsīr wa'l-Mufassirūn* (Exegesis and Exegetes). It exists in two volumes and sheds light upon the various stages involved in Qur'ānic exegeses, tracing the steps followed by exegetes and commentators from the time of the Holy Prophet (ṣ) until today. This book elaborates upon the history of this particular science and introduces the reader to major exegeses. At the same time, it provides biographical sketches of famous Qur'ānic commentators. This book is currently undergoing translational work to become available in the Persian language.

The defining characteristic of this current book, in contrast to others written upon the same topic, is that it abandons the traditional narrative methodology (wherein authors restrict themselves to merely quoting from earlier sources) for a more research based analytical methodology. We have tried to formulate the contents of this book by conducting a fresh and more precise academic investigation into the earliest and most reliable sources. This present work is a compilation of six chapters, each one of which presents, for the reader, one of the essential discussions related to this field of study.

In Chapter One, we have tackled various introductory issues dealing with the Holy Qur'ān. These include topics such as *Waḥy* (or revelation), the recognition of revelation, as well as the possibility of this unique phenomenon. We have also scrutinized an assortment of arguments presented by opponents, especially where they have sought to establish the impossibility of prophetic revelation (direct communication between God and His chosen messengers). How is it that an individual develops a level of ability and competence that allows him to converse directly with the Divine? Is it possible that such a person can or be allowed to distort the message revealed unto him by God? Subsequently, in this chapter, we have dwelt on discussions about the history of revelation. In doing so, we have documented the history of revelation in general, as well as Qur'ānic revelation in particular. Alongside this, we have also presented a history of the descent of divine revelation upon the Holy Prophet (ṣ). We have explained the manner in which the Prophet (ṣ), upon receiving divine communication, would recite this heavenly message for it to be immediately recorded by Muslim scribes. We have also looked upon the actual processes and methods used in recording these said verses to understand the minute details of the techniques used by scribes in that era.

In Chapter Two, we have pondered upon such issues as the commencement of prophetic revelation upon the Holy Prophet (ṣ). Similarly, we have dealt with the three-year period of abeyance that took place after the first revelations were received. We have also shed light upon the question of *al-nuzūl al-daf'ī* (a kind of descent, in which, the Holy Prophet (ṣ) received God's message in its entirety, in just one act of divine revelation), and the question of *al-nuzūl al-tadrījī* (another form of descent, in which God's divine message was revealed onto the Holy Prophet (ṣ) continually, in bits and pieces, over the entire period of his prophetic mission). We have also discussed the various views held by eminent scholars in relation to these two questions. Subsequently, we elaborated the pattern in which the chapters and verses of the Holy Qur'ān were revealed, discussing whether these chapters and verses were revealed in the Makkan period of the Prophet's mission or the Madīnite one. Similarly, the actual criteria, involved in identifying a particular verse as belonging to one of these two prophetic periods, has also been examined in this portion. The advantages gained through such identification, and the exceptions applicable to these criteria, are amongst the issues tackled by us during this discussion. Moreover, we have presented the various causes that have led to the revelation of particular verses, while deliberating upon the environmental and historical background in which they were revealed. Under the same context, we have measured up the pivotal difference between the "cause" and the "historical background" of any given revelation. Going forward, we discuss the *Tanzīl*[1] (denotative meaning) and the *Ta'wīl*[2] (connotative meaning) of Qur'ānic verses, along with the ways and means of recognizing the causes behind any particular revelation. The reader shall be introduced to the various names of the Holy Qur'ān, the meaning of the words *Sūrah* and *Āyah*, the names of the various chapters of the Holy Qur'ān. Following it, is the discussion of whether these names are *Tawqīfī*[3] or one is permitted to use alternative names other than the ones

1. *Tanzīl* (from the root *n-z-l*) literally means "descent" and, relative to the text here, means the denotative meaning and significance of a piece of revelation sent down upon the Holy Prophet (ṣ).

2. *Ta'wīl* (from the root *a-w-l*) literally means "to send back." When used with relation to Qur'ānic revelation it means "the interpretation of the literal content of the Qur'ān so as to reach the inner and true meaning of revelation." The reason why this word is used in such a meaning is that when interpreting the verses of the Qur'ān, one must "send back" or "redirect" the literal meaning of various verses to the well-established fundamental principles laid out by the Qur'ān itself, so as to gain access to the actual meaning of the message therein.

3. *Tawqīfī* is an adjective indicating that a particular thing (or circumstance), for which this word has been used, is of a nature that one may not transgress upon the limits defined by it. When used in reference to the names of Qur'ānic chapters, it

used by the Holy Prophet (ṣ). Finally, the number of chapters and verses that exist in the Holy Qur'ān and the grammatical inflexions related to the names of these chapters come into consideration.

In Chapter Three, we shall go on to introduce the systematic pattern in which the Holy Qur'ān is compiled (the pattern followed by the verses in the various chapters) and the fact that this pattern is intentional and deliberate. Then onwards, we shall speak of the different codices belonging to the various companions of the Holy Prophet (ṣ), codices that existed until the time of the third caliph ʿUthmān ibn ʿAffān. We shall also relate how he ordered the official recompilation of the Holy Qur'ān to take place, after which one complete codex came to replace all the other codices as the only official and comprehensive compilation of the Holy Qur'ān. This official document was also called the *Umm* (mother) or *Imām* (leader) of all codices. In this chapter, the special characteristics of the ʿUthmānī Codex, the style of written Arabic incorporated into this particular compilation and the source of this style in Arabic texts will be analyzed. Apart from this, discussions related to the differences that existed between the various codices, and the evolutional journey of the style in which Arabic texts were written until the advent of printing, will be presented to the reader.

In Chapter Four, the discourse shall move on to the various reciters of the Holy Qur'ān and the seven principal recitational styles. The reasons behind the differences in these various styles will be looked upon, as well as the criteria used to determine which one of these styles is the most authentic. Then we shall introduce to the reader the recitational style of ʿĀṣim, as narrated by Ḥafṣ, which is considered the most credible of them all. We will also present evidence regarding the veracity of this claim and shall display that, according to the chain of narrators, this is the same recitational style as the one narrated from Imam ʿAlī ibn Abī-Ṭālib (ʿa) himself.

In Chapter Five, we shall deal with the possibility of distortions or adulterations with regard to the Holy Qur'ān. Therein, we shall see that there exists a clear consensus amongst the scholars and researchers of the Muslim world that no such adulteration or manipulation has ever taken place. According to the arguments presented in this chapter, it will become clear that no reduction, nor any form of addition, has been experienced by the Holy Qur'ān since its original revelation.

Finally, Chapter Six, which is the last chapter of this book, discusses the numerous translations written for the Holy Qur'ān. We have presented the edicts of Shīʿah and Sunni jurisprudents with respect to these translations,

means that these names are immutable and that we are not allowed to replace them with others.

along with a history of such translational works. In the end, we present a list of popular translations of the Holy Qur'ān, which exist in a variety of different languages.

These are the issues we have dealt with in this present volume. In doing so, our solemn intention has been to remain true to all the principles of honesty and impartiality, which are prerequisite to any serious academic effort. We have toiled, sincerely and tirelessly, to base all the contents of this book on the firm foundations of irrefutable proofs, so that the truth may be presented as it truly is. It has, therefore, been our goal to produce a work that could indeed be considered a service to the world of academic research, and, as a result, find acceptability in the sublime court of the one and only God.

I would also like to express my endless gratitude for the invaluable work put in, towards the successful publication of this book, by the various individuals involved in the numerous stages that were required for its completion. Similarly, I extend my sincere thanks to the honorable scholar Mr. Sayyid Muḥammad ʿAlī ʿAyaḍī, who painstakingly edited the current text. I humbly request the Almighty to increase His divine blessings upon all the above mentioned.

Muḥammad Hādī Maʿrifat

CHAPTER ONE:
THE PHENOMENON OF DIVINE REVELATION

The importance of divine revelation is rooted in the foundational significance that it holds in recognizing God's word. The Holy Qur'ān can only be accepted as the word of God if the concept of revelation itself becomes clear and the factual nature of this phenomenon is acknowledged.

The Holy Qur'ān, which is indeed the very word of God, reached humanity through the channel of divine revelation. Revelation is, in fact, synonymous with an unseen communication that descends onto this material abode from the hallowed superior realms above:

﴿ وَإِنَّهُۥ لَتَنزِيلُ رَبِّ ٱلۡعَٰلَمِينَ ١٩٢ نَزَلَ بِهِ ٱلرُّوحُ ٱلۡأَمِينُ ١٩٣ عَلَىٰ قَلۡبِكَ لِتَكُونَ مِنَ ٱلۡمُنذِرِينَ ١٩٤ بِلِسَانٍ عَرَبِيّٖ مُّبِينٖ ١٩٥﴾

"And most surely this is a revelation from the Lord of the worlds. The Faithful Spirit has descended with it, upon your heart that you may be from among those who warn. In plain Arabic language."[1]

﴿ ذَٰلِكَ مِمَّآ أَوۡحَىٰٓ إِلَيۡكَ رَبُّكَ مِنَ ٱلۡحِكۡمَةِ ﴾

"This is of what your Lord has revealed to you of wisdom."[2]

God's relates, in the Holy Qur'ān, the words of His Blessed Prophet (ṣ):

﴿ وَأُوحِيَ إِلَيَّ هَٰذَا ٱلۡقُرۡءَانُ لِأُنذِرَكُم بِهِۦ وَمَنۢ بَلَغَ ﴾

"...and this Qur'ān has been revealed to me that with it I may warn you and whomsoever it reaches."[3]

The issue of revelation is, in reality, the most crucial question related to the study of the Holy Qur'ān. The discussion regarding divine revelation actually pertains to the question of how communication is established between the

1. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Shuʿarā' (26: 192-195).
2. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Isrā' (17:39).
3. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Anʿām (06:19).

heavenly realm and this lowly sphere of corporeal existence. Pondering upon this question, one is inevitably led towards inquiring about the very possibility of any such communication taking place. These subjects are argued upon when dealing with the topic of revelation. Subsequently, by answering questions spawned by such investigations, we are able to pave a way towards the acceptance of the Holy Qur'ān's divine origins.

The Word Waḥy in the Dictionary

The Arabic word *Waḥy* (وحي) has been defined in the dictionary as "indication," "writing," "inscription," "message," "hidden speech," "concealed communication," "masked declaration," "haste," "swiftness," and in fact, everything pertaining to the genre of written, oral or physical communication that is transmitted, in one way or the other, to the recipient of this communication in question.

Al-Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī says, "*Waḥy* is a hidden message transmitted in cipher and with swiftness."[1]

Similarly, Abū-Isḥāq says, "*Waḥy*, in the dictionary, is any form of concealed communication, and for this very reason the same word is commonly used to mean inspiration."

Ibn Barrī agreed with the above two definitions and said, "*Waḥy* means communication in a veiled and concealed form."

The Word Waḥy in the Holy Qur'ān

The term *"Waḥy"* appears in the Holy Qur'ān in one of these four meanings:

A hidden indication (the same as the word's literal definition): When speaking of the prophet Zakariyyā (or Zachariah), the Holy Qur'ān says:

﴿فَخَرَجَ عَلَىٰ قَوْمِهِۦ مِنَ ٱلْمِحْرَابِ فَأَوْحَىٰٓ إِلَيْهِمْ أَن سَبِّحُوا۟ بُكْرَةً وَعَشِيًّا﴾

"So he went forth to his people from his place of worship, then he made known to them that they should glorify (Allah) morning and evening."[2]

Instinctual guidance: Natural directives built into the very constitution of all things. All entities across the existential spectrum, from inanimate objects, vegetative creatures, animals to humans, hold within themselves instinctual instructions that guide them towards ways through which they can preserve the continuity of their existence. The Holy Qur'ān infers to this natural guidance using the word Waḥy.

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1. ***Al-Mufradāt fi Gharā'ib al-Qur'ān***, by al-Rāghib Iṣfahānī, pg. 515.
2. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah Maryam (19:11).

﴿وَأَوْحَىٰ رَبُّكَ إِلَى ٱلنَّحْلِ أَنِ ٱتَّخِذِى مِنَ ٱلْجِبَالِ بُيُوتًا وَمِنَ ٱلشَّجَرِ وَمِمَّا يَعْرِشُونَ ﴿٦٨﴾ ثُمَّ كُلِى مِن كُلِّ ٱلثَّمَرَٰتِ فَٱسْلُكِى سُبُلَ رَبِّكِ ذُلُلًا ۚ يَخْرُجُ مِنۢ بُطُونِهَا شَرَابٌ مُّخْتَلِفٌ أَلْوَٰنُهُۥ فِيهِ شِفَآءٌ لِّلنَّاسِ ۗ إِنَّ فِى ذَٰلِكَ لَءَايَةً لِّقَوْمٍ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ ﴿٦٩﴾﴾

"And your Lord revealed to the bee saying: Make hives in the mountains and in the trees and in what they build: Then eat of all the fruits and walk in the ways of your Lord submissively. There comes forth from within it a beverage of many colors, in which there is healing for men; most surely there is a sign in this for a people who reflect."[1]

This natural instructional system, which exists within the very essence of all things, is indeed one of the best secrets from amongst the many mysteries of Mother Nature. The effects of this system are well-known, but its origins are shrouded in mystery and concealed safely, far away from curious eyes. The secretive character of this system is the reason why the word *waḥy* has been used in the Holy Qur'ān in reference to this phenomenon.

﴿ فَقَضَىٰهُنَّ سَبْعَ سَمَٰوَاتٍ فِى يَوْمَيْنِ وَأَوْحَىٰ فِى كُلِّ سَمَآءٍ أَمْرَهَا ۚ وَزَيَّنَّا ٱلسَّمَآءَ ٱلدُّنْيَا بِمَصَٰبِيحَ وَحِفْظًا ۚ ذَٰلِكَ تَقْدِيرُ ٱلْعَزِيزِ ٱلْعَلِيمِ ﴾

"So He ordained them seven heavens in two periods, and revealed in every heaven its affair; and We adorned the lower heaven with brilliant stars and (made it) to guard; that is the decree of the Mighty, the Knowing."[2]

Inspiration (communication from an unseen source): Sometimes a person receives a message, the source of which is not known. Especially, an occurrence such as this take place when an individual finds himself stuck in a difficult situation and perceives that there exists no way for him to rid himself of the said dilemma. Here, we frequently find that suddenly and unexpectedly the hearts of such individuals are illuminated with inspirations that lead them towards salvation. These inspirations are, in fact, ***messages from the unseen world through which God, in His endless mercy, seeks to assist humanity***. The Holy Qur'ān has also used the word *waḥy* for this particular form of communication. In narrating the story of Mūsā (ʿa) (or Moses), the Holy Qur'ān says:

1. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Naḥl (16:68-69).
2. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah Fuṣṣilat (41:12).

﴿ وَأَوْحَيْنَآ إِلَىٰٓ أُمِّ مُوسَىٰٓ أَنْ أَرْضِعِيهِ ۖ فَإِذَا خِفْتِ عَلَيْهِ فَأَلْقِيهِ فِى ٱلْيَمِّ وَلَا تَخَافِى وَلَا تَحْزَنِىٓ ۖ إِنَّا رَآدُّوهُ إِلَيْكِ وَجَاعِلُوهُ مِنَ ٱلْمُرْسَلِينَ ﴾

"And We revealed to Musa's mothers, saying: Give him suck, then when you fear for him, cast him into the river and do not fear nor grieve; surely We will bring him back to you and make him one of the apostles."[1]

﴿ وَلَقَدْ مَنَنَّا عَلَيْكَ مَرَّةً أُخْرَىٰٓ ﴿٣٧﴾ إِذْ أَوْحَيْنَآ إِلَىٰٓ أُمِّكَ مَا يُوحَىٰٓ ﴿٣٨﴾ أَنِ ٱقْذِفِيهِ فِى ٱلتَّابُوتِ فَٱقْذِفِيهِ فِى ٱلْيَمِّ فَلْيُلْقِهِ ٱلْيَمُّ بِٱلسَّاحِلِ يَأْخُذْهُ عَدُوٌّ لِّى وَعَدُوٌّ لَّهُۥ ۚ وَأَلْقَيْتُ عَلَيْكَ مَحَبَّةً مِّنِّى وَلِتُصْنَعَ عَلَىٰ عَيْنِىٓ ﴿٣٩﴾ إِذْ تَمْشِىٓ أُخْتُكَ فَتَقُولُ هَلْ أَدُلُّكُمْ عَلَىٰ مَن يَكْفُلُهُۥ ۖ فَرَجَعْنَٰكَ إِلَىٰٓ أُمِّكَ كَىْ تَقَرَّ عَيْنُهَا وَلَا تَحْزَنَ ۚ وَقَتَلْتَ نَفْسًا فَنَجَّيْنَٰكَ مِنَ ٱلْغَمِّ وَفَتَنَّٰكَ فُتُونًا ۚ فَلَبِثْتَ سِنِينَ فِىٓ أَهْلِ مَدْيَنَ ثُمَّ جِئْتَ عَلَىٰ قَدَرٍ يَٰمُوسَىٰ ﴿٤٠﴾ ﴾

"And certainly We bestowed on you a favor at another time; When We revealed to your mother what was revealed; Saying: Put him into a chest, then cast it down into the river, then the river shall throw him on the shore; there shall take him up one who is an enemy to Me and enemy to him, and I cast down upon you love from Me, and that you might be brought up before My eyes; When your sister went and said: Shall I direct you to one who will take charge of him? So We brought you back to your mother, that her eye might be cooled and she should not grieve and you killed a man, then We delivered you from the grief, and We tried you with (a severe) trying. Then you stayed for years among the people of Madyan; then you came hither as ordained, O Mūsā."[2]

When Mūsā (ʿa) was born, his mother was intensely worried about his wellbeing. Out of the blue, and like a flash that lightened up her mind, she was inspired to place her trust in God and, in doing so, continued to feed her newborn son. On sensing danger, she was instructed to hide her baby in a trunk. Subsequently, she was told to release this trunk into the River Nile, while knowing that God would protect her and her child from all threats. The inspired message even comforted her regarding to the temporary loss she faced, promising that the baby would return to her in safety and health. This was the communication experienced by the pure and God fearing mind of

1. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Qaṣaṣ (28:7).
2. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah Ṭā-Hā (20:37-40).

Mūsā's mother due to her complete and utter reliance on God's will. Indeed, God aids his pious and chaste servants through inspirations similar to the one narrated in this account.

The Holy Qur'ān has even employed the word *waḥy* to mean temptations, suggestions and whisperings, which are satanic in nature and origin:

﴿ وَكَذَٰلِكَ جَعَلْنَا لِكُلِّ نَبِيٍّ عَدُوًّا شَيَاطِينَ الْإِنسِ وَالْجِنِّ يُوحِي بَعْضُهُمْ إِلَىٰ بَعْضٍ زُخْرُفَ الْقَوْلِ غُرُورًا ۚ وَلَوْ شَاءَ رَبُّكَ مَا فَعَلُوهُ ۖ فَذَرْهُمْ وَمَا يَفْتَرُونَ ﴾

"And thus did We make for every prophet an enemy, the Satans from among men and jinn, some of them suggesting to others varnished falsehood to deceive (them), and had your Lord pleased they would not have done it, therefore leave them and that which they forge."[1]

﴿ وَلَا تَأْكُلُوا مِمَّا لَمْ يُذْكَرِ اسْمُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْهِ وَإِنَّهُ لَفِسْقٌ ۗ وَإِنَّ الشَّيَاطِينَ لَيُوحُونَ إِلَىٰ أَوْلِيَائِهِمْ لِيُجَادِلُوكُمْ ۖ وَإِنْ أَطَعْتُمُوهُمْ إِنَّكُمْ لَمُشْرِكُونَ ﴾

"And do not eat of that on which Allah's name has not been mentioned, and that is most surely a transgression; and most surely the Satans suggest to their friends that they should contend with you; and if you obey them, you shall most surely be polytheists."[2]

This is the same kind of *waḥy* that the Holy Qur'ān talks about in the chapter named *al-Nās*.

﴿مِنْ شَرِّ الْوَسْوَاسِ الْخَنَّاسِ ۝ الَّذِي يُوَسْوِسُ فِي صُدُورِ النَّاسِ ۝ مِنَ الْجِنَّةِ وَالنَّاسِ ﴾

"From the evil of the whisperings of the slinking (Satan), Who whispers into the hearts of men, From among the jinn and the men."[3]

Prophetic revelation: *Waḥy*, when used in this meaning, is particular to individuals who occupy the office of prophethood, and is, therefore, one of the inherent indicators of their apostolic mission. This word has been used more than seventy times in the Holy Qur'ān to convey this particular meaning.

1. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Anʿām (6:112).
2. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Anʿām (6:121).
3. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Nās (114:4-6).

﴿ وَكَذَٰلِكَ أَوْحَيْنَآ إِلَيْكَ قُرْءَانًا عَرَبِيًّا لِّتُنذِرَ أُمَّ ٱلْقُرَىٰ وَمَنْ حَوْلَهَا وَتُنذِرَ يَوْمَ ٱلْجَمْعِ لَا رَيْبَ فِيهِ ۚ فَرِيقٌ فِى ٱلْجَنَّةِ وَفَرِيقٌ فِى ٱلسَّعِيرِ ﴾

"And thus have We revealed to you an Arabic Qur'ān, that you may warn the mother city and those around it, and that you may give warning of the day of gathering together wherein is no doubt; a party shall be in the garden and (another) party in the burning fire."[1]

﴿ نَحْنُ نَقُصُّ عَلَيْكَ أَحْسَنَ ٱلْقَصَصِ بِمَآ أَوْحَيْنَآ إِلَيْكَ هَٰذَا ٱلْقُرْءَانَ وَإِن كُنتَ مِن قَبْلِهِۦ لَمِنَ ٱلْغَٰفِلِينَ ﴾

"We narrate to you the best of narratives, by Our revealing to you this Qur'ān, though before this you were certainly one of those who did not know."[2]

Prophets are individuals who, through their efforts, attain a very high level of intellectual and spiritual perfection. In turn, this perfection prepares them to receive divine revelation.

When speaking of this phenomenon, Imam al-Ḥasan al-ʿAskarī (ʿa)[3] said,

> "God found the Holy Prophet's heart to be the best of hearts and, thus, chose him for prophethood."[4]

Therefore, the critical factor that differentiates a prophet from ordinary men is that he engages himself in the struggle for self-purification to the extent that he becomes able to receive divine communication.

The Holy Prophet (ṣ) said,

> "Never did God select an individual for prophethood unless that individual had first attained intellectual perfection and, thus, enjoyed cognitive superiority over the people of his nation."[5]

1. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Shūrā (42:7).
2. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah Yūsuf (12:3).
3. Imam al-Ḥasan ibn ʿAlī al-ʿAskarī (ʿa) is the 11th immaculate imam from the progeny of the Holy Prophet (ṣ).
4. Majlisī, Muḥammad Bāqir. ***Biḥār al-Anwār***, vol. 18, pg. 205, ḥadīth 36.
5. Kulaynī, Muḥammad ibn Yaʿqūb, ***Uṣūl Al-Kāfī***, vol. 1, pg. 13.

According to Mullā Ṣadrā (Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Shīrāzī), the inner self of the prophet attains realization of the essence of prophethood much before his exterior self is adorned with this responsibility. The prophet starts by achieving perfection in his inner self and, subsequently, signs of this inner perfection begin to spill over onto his exterior form. It is after the attainment of this sublime inner state that the 'bodily mould' of the prophet begins to shape itself in conformity with the attributes of his 'heart'. His initial journey must be from the temporal to the divine, and only then can he endeavor upon a journey from the Creator, but with Him, back towards the created'.[1]

Therefore, we understand that revelation is, in fact, inner knowledge attained through the unseen guidance of the divine.

﴿ قُلۡ مَن كَانَ عَدُوّٗا لِّجِبۡرِيلَ فَإِنَّهُۥ نَزَّلَهُۥ عَلَىٰ قَلۡبِكَ بِإِذۡنِ ٱللَّهِ مُصَدِّقٗا لِّمَا بَيۡنَ يَدَيۡهِ وَهُدٗى وَبُشۡرَىٰ لِلۡمُؤۡمِنِينَ ﴾

"Say: Whoever is the enemy of Jibrīl-- for surely he revealed it to your heart by Allah's command, verifying that which is before it and guidance and good news for the believers."[2]

﴿نَزَلَ بِهِ ٱلرُّوحُ ٱلۡأَمِينُ ١٩٣ عَلَىٰ قَلۡبِكَ لِتَكُونَ مِنَ ٱلۡمُنذِرِينَ﴾

"The Faithful Spirit has descended with it, upon your heart that you may be of the warners "[3]

Revelation, similar to inspiration, is an illumination of the inner self of an individual on certain exceptional occasions. The only difference between the two is that in inspiration one does not know the source of the message in question, but in the case of revelation the prophet is well aware of the source of what he receives and, thus, he never doubts the authenticity of its contents. In reality, this state of awareness and readiness renders a prophet immune to bewilderment or error regarding the communication he receives.

Concerning this very issue, Zurārah questioned Imam al-Ṣādiq (ʿa) saying, "What enabled the Prophet (ṣ) to be absolutely sure that the messages he received were divine and not satanic in nature?"

The Imam (ʿa) replied,

"Whenever God chooses a prophet, He bestows upon him composure and

1. Shīrāzī, Ṣadr al-Dīn, ***Sharḥ Uṣūl Al-Kāfi***, vol. 3, pg. 454.
2. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Baqarah (2:97).
3. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Shuʿarā' (26:193-194).

dignity rendering him such that when he receives divine revelation, it is as clear to him as something seen with his own eyes."[1]

On yet another occasion, the Imam (ʿa) it was asked, "How do prophets come to know that they are prophets?"

Imam al-Ṣādiq (ʿa) replied,

"The veil (between them and reality) is removed."[2]

In other words, when prophethood is bestowed upon a prophet, he comes to acquire "absolute experienced certainty"[3], having already attained the two states of "certainty through knowledge"[4] and "certainty through self-perception"[5] previously. Therefore, it is not a matter of astonishment if a man, pure and tested, comes to be chosen by God as His messenger and becomes trusted with God's own message. As the Qur'ān says:

﴿هُوَ ٱلَّذِى جَعَلَ ٱلشَّمْسَ ضِيَآءً وَٱلْقَمَرَ نُورًا وَقَدَّرَهُۥ مَنَازِلَ لِتَعْلَمُوا۟ عَدَدَ ٱلسِّنِينَ وَٱلْحِسَابَ ۚ
مَا خَلَقَ ٱللَّهُ ذَٰلِكَ إِلَّا بِٱلْحَقِّ ۚ يُفَصِّلُ ٱلْـَٔايَـٰتِ لِقَوْمٍ يَعْلَمُونَ﴾

"He it is Who made the sun a shining brightness and the moon a light, and ordained for it mansions that you might know the computation of years and the reckoning. Allah did not create it but with truth; He makes the signs manifest for a people who know."[6]

The given verse indicates that those who doubt the Prophet of God (ṣ), and accuse him of sorcery, are merely victims of their own ignorance, for if they had contemplated about that which they denied, they would have seen that their denial was baseless to begin with.

God Almighty, in order to remove all doubt and astonishment regarding the phenomenon of prophethood, clearly declares:

﴿إِنَّآ أَوْحَيْنَآ إِلَيْكَ كَمَآ أَوْحَيْنَآ إِلَىٰ نُوحٍ وَٱلنَّبِيِّـۧنَ مِنۢ بَعْدِهِۦ ۚ وَأَوْحَيْنَآ إِلَىٰٓ إِبْرَٰهِيمَ وَإِسْمَـٰعِيلَ
وَإِسْحَـٰقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ وَٱلْأَسْبَاطِ وَعِيسَىٰ وَأَيُّوبَ وَيُونُسَ وَهَـٰرُونَ وَسُلَيْمَـٰنَ ۚ وَءَاتَيْنَا دَاوُۥدَ زَبُورًا ﴿١٦٣﴾
وَرُسُلًا قَدْ قَصَصْنَـٰهُمْ عَلَيْكَ مِن قَبْلُ وَرُسُلًا لَّمْ نَقْصُصْهُمْ عَلَيْكَ ۚ وَكَلَّمَ ٱللَّهُ مُوسَىٰ تَكْلِيمًا

1. ʿAyyāshī Samarqandī, Muḥammad ibn Masʿūd, ***Tafsīr al-ʿAyyāshī***, vol. 2, pg. 201, Ḥadīth. 106. ***Biḥār al-Anwār***, vol. 18, pg. 262, Ḥadīth. 16.
2. ***Biḥār al-Anwār***, vol. 11, pg. 56, Ḥadīth. 56.
3. *Ḥaqq al-Yaqīn* (حقُ اليقين).
4. *ʿIlm al-Yaqīn* (علمُ اليقين).
5. *ʿAyn al-Yaqīn* (عينُ اليقين).
6. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah Yūnus (10:5).

﴿١٦٤﴾ رُسُلًا مُّبَشِّرِينَ وَمُنذِرِينَ لِئَلَّا يَكُونَ لِلنَّاسِ عَلَى ٱللَّهِ حُجَّةٌۢ بَعْدَ ٱلرُّسُلِ ۚ وَكَانَ ٱللَّهُ عَزِيزًا
حَكِيمًا ﴿١٦٥﴾ لَّٰكِنِ ٱللَّهُ يَشْهَدُ بِمَآ أَنزَلَ إِلَيْكَ ۖ أَنزَلَهُۥ بِعِلْمِهِۦ ۖ وَٱلْمَلَٰٓئِكَةُ يَشْهَدُونَ ۚ وَكَفَىٰ بِٱللَّهِ
شَهِيدًا ﴿١٦٦﴾ إِنَّ ٱلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا۟ وَصَدُّوا۟ عَن سَبِيلِ ٱللَّهِ قَدْ ضَلُّوا۟ ضَلَٰلًۢا بَعِيدًا ﴿١٦٧﴾

"We have sent thee inspiration, as We sent it to Noah and the Messengers after him: we sent inspiration to Abraham, Isma'il, Isaac, Jacob and the Tribes, to Jesus, Job, Jonah, Aaron, and Solomon, and to David We gave the Psalms. Of some messengers We have already told thee the story; of others We have not;- and to Moses Allah spoke direct;- Messengers who gave good news as well as warning, that mankind, after (the coming) of the messengers, should have no plea against Allah: For Allah is Exalted in Power, Wise. But Allah beareth witness that what He hath sent unto thee He hath sent from His (own) knowledge, and the angels bear witness: But enough is Allah for a witness. Those who reject Faith and keep off (men) from the way of Allah, have verily strayed far, far away from the Path."[1]

Thus, it is neither strange nor baffling that a man be chosen to receive divine messages. In fact, this matter is such that we see it present throughout human history and, therefore, man's familiarity with it is well established.

The Different Types of Prophetic Revelation

According to the Qur'ān, prophetic revelation is of three kinds:

وَمَا كَانَ لِبَشَرٍ أَن يُكَلِّمَهُ ٱللَّهُ إِلَّا وَحْيًا أَوْ مِن وَرَآئِ حِجَابٍ أَوْ يُرْسِلَ رَسُولًا فَيُوحِىَ بِإِذْنِهِۦ مَا
يَشَآءُ ۚ إِنَّهُۥ عَلِىٌّ حَكِيمٌ ﴿٥١﴾ وَكَذَٰلِكَ أَوْحَيْنَآ إِلَيْكَ رُوحًا مِّنْ أَمْرِنَا ۚ مَا كُنتَ تَدْرِى مَا
ٱلْكِتَٰبُ وَلَا ٱلْإِيمَٰنُ وَلَٰكِن جَعَلْنَٰهُ نُورًا نَّهْدِى بِهِۦ مَن نَّشَآءُ مِنْ عِبَادِنَا ۚ وَإِنَّكَ لَتَهْدِىٓ إِلَىٰ
صِرَٰطٍ مُّسْتَقِيمٍ ﴿٥٢﴾

"And it is not for any mortal that Allah should speak to him except by revelation or from behind a veil, or by sending a messenger and revealing by His permission what He pleases; surely He is High, Wise. And thus did We reveal to you an inspired book by Our command. You did not know what the Book was, nor (what) the faith (was), but We made it a light, guiding thereby whom We please of Our servants; and most surely you show the way to the right path:"[2]

1. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Nisā' (4:163-167).
2. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Shūrā (42:51-52).

Direct Revelation: This type of message was revealed directly onto the Prophet's heart, without even a single intermediary between God and His Messenger. The Holy Prophet (ṣ), commenting upon this sort of divine communication, said,

"Most certainly, the Holy Spirit revealed to my heart.[1]"[2]

The Creation of Sound: This type of revelation was such that the holy Prophet (ṣ), and none except him, would hear the divine message as a sound in his ears. Hearing sounds without seeing a speaker is like listening to someone talking from behind a curtain, and that is why this type of revelation was also labeled as "[sounds] from beyond the curtain." Revelations upon the Prophet Mūsā (ʿa), especially the ones he received on top of Mount Sinai, were of this category. Similarly, divine speech that the Prophet (ṣ) experienced during the "Night of Accession" also falls within this category.

Revelation through an angel: This particular kind of divine revelation was carried to the Prophet (ṣ) by the angel Gabriel. The Qur'ān mentions this in the following verse:

﴿ قُلۡ مَن كَانَ عَدُوّٗا لِّجِبۡرِيلَ فَإِنَّهُۥ نَزَّلَهُۥ عَلَىٰ قَلۡبِكَ بِإِذۡنِ ٱللَّهِ مُصَدِّقٗا لِّمَا بَيۡنَ يَدَيۡهِ وَهُدٗى وَبُشۡرَىٰ لِلۡمُؤۡمِنِينَ ﴾

"Say: Whoever is the enemy of Jibrīl-- for surely he revealed it to your heart by Allah's command, verifying that which is before it and guidance and good news for the believers."[3]

The Possibility of Revelation

As we have already mentioned, "revelation" is the establishment of a connection between the superior heavenly realm and the inferior material one. This explanation, in itself, automatically transfers our minds to a fundamental question: How is such a connection possible, when there must exist a similarity between the 'connecter' and the 'thing being connected to' for a connection to be established? Apart from this, concepts such as "ascent," "descent" and "opposites" can only be imagined within a spatial framework containing several opposing dimensions, whereas, we know that the metaphysical world is utterly incorporeal and devoid of material characteristics.

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1. This proves that the Holy Spirit is an entity other than the angel Jabrā'īl (Gabriel).
2. Al-Suyūṭī, ***al-Itqān***, vol. 1, pg. 44.
3. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Baqarah (2:97).

Some western intellectuals, inclined towards rationalizing religiosity, have argued that the phenomenon called "revelation" is, in fact, a mere reflection of a prophet's inner most yearning for social reform. They saw prophets, not as agents of the Divine, but as illuminated intellectuals carrying within themselves a supreme desire for change and betterment. This desire would, sometimes, materialize in the form of a heavenly sound or angelic vision. As a result, the prophet would end up believing that this supposed communication came to him from a source other than his own internal self. These writers declare that since so called "revelation" is nothing but a product of a prophet's own intellect, and the intellect is, in turn, a product of a person's social and ideological background, therefore, the teachings of these prophets are naturally susceptible to factual errors and mistakes. They go on to claim that such prophets have incorporated into their teachings beliefs that were commonly accepted in their times. These beliefs were proven erroneous later on. Based on the presence of such inaccuracies, these theorists conclude that the teachings of these prophets were not divine in origin, simply because there is no possibility of error in God's knowledge and speech.[1]

Such an explanation is, in reality, an utter denial of "prophethood" itself. For according to this theory, all prophets are either completely senile (and, therefore, unable to differentiate reality from imagination) or deliberate liars and cheats. Whereas, history stands witness to the fact that the prophets were paragons of honesty and embodiments of intellectual and cognitive excellence. In truth, these western thinkers have trapped themselves within two clear fallacies:-

1. The contents used and analyzed by these writers as samples of "revelation" were imperfect translations of select books, books that are themselves littered with malicious alterations, distortions and additions to the original text. In reality, establishing the authenticity of these texts should have been a pre-requisite for any such analysis.

2. They imagined man's existence to be merely material, whereas his entity is a combination of body and soul. Since the soul, being incorporeal, is compatible with the superior metaphysical realm, there exists a uniting factor that allows contact to be established between that world and the material plane.

Man's spirituality and his attachment to the metaphysical realm are issues that have been thoroughly deliberated upon in other books. We, however, for the sake of reaching a better comprehension of the phenomenon called

1. Wajdī, Muhammad Farīd, ***Dā'irat Ma'ārif al-Qarn al-'Ishrīn***, vol. 10, pg. 715.

"revelation," shall briefly discuss this matter in light of the Qur'ān and the *aḥādith*[1].

Human Spirituality

Human spirituality has captivated the attention of man throughout his intellectual history. It has been thoroughly analyzed by philosophy, culture and art. Similarly, it has occupied a special place within Islamic philosophy and has been frequently referred to in the Qur'ān and the *Aḥādīth*, which we will point out here.

Man is a creature with dual dimensions and, thus, he finds himself standing somewhere in between the hallowed incorporeal realm and the lowly material one. This is because he is a combination of body and soul and, as a result of this combination, a heavenly being and a worldly one. The Qur'ān, when elaborating upon the phases involved in the creation of man, begins with the fetal phase and then, step by step, elevates him to the point where he becomes infused with a soul.

﴿وَلَقَدْ خَلَقْنَا ٱلْإِنسَـٰنَ مِن سُلَـٰلَةٍ مِّن طِينٍ ﴿١٢﴾ ثُمَّ جَعَلْنَـٰهُ نُطْفَةً فِى قَرَارٍ مَّكِينٍ ﴿١٣﴾ ثُمَّ خَلَقْنَا ٱلنُّطْفَةَ عَلَقَةً فَخَلَقْنَا ٱلْعَلَقَةَ مُضْغَةً فَخَلَقْنَا ٱلْمُضْغَةَ عِظَـٰمًا فَكَسَوْنَا ٱلْعِظَـٰمَ لَحْمًا﴾

"And certainly We created man of an extract of clay, Then We made him a small seed in a firm resting-place, Then We made the seed a clot, then We made the clot a lump of flesh, then We made (in) the lump of flesh bones, then We clothed the bones with flesh…"[2]

Until this verse, the Qur'ān recounts the stages of man's material creation, but then comes the following verse carrying a completely new meaning:

﴿ ثُمَّ أَنشَأْنَـٰهُ خَلْقًا ءَاخَرَ ۚ فَتَبَارَكَ ٱللَّهُ أَحْسَنُ ٱلْخَـٰلِقِينَ ﴾

"... then We caused it to grow into another creation, so blessed be Allah, the best of the creators."[3]

It is here that God mentions another, most vital, step within man's creation. That step being the infusion of a soul. Infusion takes place once the fetus has completed four months after its inception. We see a similar elaboration upon man's creational phases in the following verses of the Holy Qur'ān:

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1. *Aḥādīth*, plural of *Ḥadīth*, are the narrated traditions of the Holy Prophet (ṣ) and his Infallible Progeny.
2. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Mu'minūn (23:12-14).
3. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Mu'minūn (23:14).

﴿ ٱلَّذِىٓ أَحۡسَنَ كُلَّ شَىۡءٍ خَلَقَهُۥۖ وَبَدَأَ خَلۡقَ ٱلۡإِنسَٰنِ مِن طِينٍ ۝٧ ثُمَّ جَعَلَ نَسۡلَهُۥ مِن سُلَٰلَةٖ مِّن مَّآءٖ مَّهِينٖ ۝٨ ثُمَّ سَوَّىٰهُ وَنَفَخَ فِيهِ مِن رُّوحِهِۦۖ وَجَعَلَ لَكُمُ ٱلسَّمۡعَ وَٱلۡأَبۡصَٰرَ وَٱلۡأَفۡـِٔدَةَۚ قَلِيلٗا مَّا تَشۡكُرُونَ ۝٩ ﴾

"Who made good everything that He has created, and He began the creation of man from dust. Then He made his progeny of an extract, of water held in light estimation. Then He made him complete and breathed into him of His spirit, and made for you the ears and the eyes and the hearts; little is it that you give thanks."[1]

It is most interesting that, in these given verses, the Holy Qur'ān talks of the soul as a phenomenon belonging to the heavenly realm, transcending material existence. The phrase *rūhiḥī* (روحِهِ) is used, which literally means "a soul belonging to God." Imam al-Ṣādiq (ʿa) said,

> "God created a being and created a soul, and then commanded an angel to infuse the soul into this being."[2]

Thus, from the Holy Qur'ān's point of view, man is a creature born of a union between body and soul, and within this union the body forms a mould into which the soul is later instilled.

Similarly, from the stand point of philosophy, man is not exclusively material in his being. He is not defined merely by the physical existence of his body, but is an entity that transcends materiality. Evidence for this fact are the various characteristics and effects that are seen in human beings; characteristics and effects that are in themselves incompatible with absolute corporeality.[3]

Since man is an entity both material and spiritual, it is but natural that he be able to establish contact with the metaphysical domain. Such a contact is completely possible because it simply represents a utilization of man's spiritual essence. The phenomenon of *revelation* is, in turn, merely a most perfect instance of such a spiritual contact.

Revelation is, therefore, a spiritual phenomenon that can be found in people who have attained a high spiritual state, which makes them capable of communicating with the higher realm. They experience *visions* and are illuminated by inspirations that emanate from a source outside their own selves, quite opposite to the theory propagated by those who deny the existence of this phenomenon.

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1. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Sajdah (32:7-9).
2. ***Biḥār al-Anwār***, vol. 61, pg. 32, Ḥadīth. 5.
3. For further detail refer to ***al-Asfār al-Arbaʿah*** by Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Shīrāzī.

Revelation is not a materialization of internal desires and yearnings, but an active act of communication between man and the world beyond materiality. This contact between the two realms is, in turn, neither surprising nor unlikely, for it is an expected result of man's dual nature.

﴿أَكَانَ لِلنَّاسِ عَجَبًا أَنْ أَوْحَيْنَآ إِلَىٰ رَجُلٍ مِّنْهُمْ أَنْ أَنذِرِ ٱلنَّاسَ وَبَشِّرِ ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوٓاْ أَنَّ لَهُمْ قَدَمَ صِدْقٍ عِندَ رَبِّهِمْ ۗ قَالَ ٱلْكَـٰفِرُونَ إِنَّ هَـٰذَا لَسَـٰحِرٌ مُّبِينٌ﴾

"What! Is it a wonder to the people that We revealed to a man from among themselves, saying: Warn the people and give good news to those who believe that theirs is a footing of firmness with their Lord. The unbelievers say: This is most surely a manifest enchanter."[1]

However, the exact inner mechanism this contact is a mystery for us. We have information about its external modality and have complete faith in its existence, but man's limited cognition, confined within material phenomena, stops us from comprehending the minute processes involved in the establishment of this contact. Whenever man seeks to understand the metaphysical world through intellectual reasoning, he mistakenly tries to accommodate incorporeal phenomena within the framework of criteria that are inherently material and essentially incompatible with the first. Similarly, when he seeks to speak of the metaphysical he has no option but to use words that are coined, intrinsically, for meanings that are related to the material sphere of existence. Therefore, man's intellectual efforts in analyzing this phenomenon yield no substantial results. Explanations and the terminologies used, are nothing more than metaphorical in nature. Thus, we conclude, that even though the phenomenon itself is completely acceptable and possible, its exact comprehension is beyond the strength of the human intellect. Only individuals who have attained the highest state of spiritual excellence are able to understand what *revelation* truly is.

Modality of the Descent of Revelation

When the Holy Prophet (ṣ) received direct revelation, he would feel profound pressure upon himself. His body would heat up and beads of sweat would roll down his forehead. If he were riding an animal at the time, the animal, too, would regress downwards, under the tremendous weight of this experience, until its belly would almost touch the earth. Imam ʿAlī ibn Abī-Ṭālib (ʿa) talks about this occurrence saying,

1. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah Yūnus (10:2).

> "The Holy Prophet (ṣ) was riding a mule named al-Shahbā' when Sūrah (the Qur'ānic chapter) al-Mā'idah was revealed unto him. The revelation inflicted great pressure upon him. The animal, too, stopped and its belly regressed downwards. I say the mule's belly almost touching the ground. It was then that the Holy Prophet (ṣ) fainted and his hand landed on the head of one of his companions."[1]

ʿIbādah ibn al-Ṣamt says, "When revelation would descend unto the Holy Prophet (ṣ), his face would contract and its color would change."

He continues, "At such a moment, the Prophet (ṣ) would let his head hang down, and the companions would do the same."[2]

Sometimes the Prophet (ṣ) would be seated in a manner that his knee came to be placed upon the knee of another, and if at that time God would send down His revelation upon him, the weight of the Holy Prophet's (ṣ) knee would become intolerable for the other individual. We do not know why the Holy Prophet (ṣ) would experience these exceptional states, for we are unaware of the reality of *revelation*. If the reader desires more information on this topic, he may refer to other books, specially written, upon this very subject[3].

Groups of prejudiced individuals, trapped within their contempt for religion, have always sought to discredit "revelation" by constructing false stories and deceptive lies. These same people have sought to attack the Holy Prophet (ṣ) by attributing blatant fallacies, constructed by their own twisted minds, to his sacred person. In order to prove these stories as false and baseless, we shall start our preliminary argumentation with two critical questions:

1. At the beginning of a prophet's mission, is it possible that he be inflicted with doubt and denial about the heavenly message he experiences?

2. Can Satan gain access to and interfere with the process of *revelation*, causing his own blasphemous words to become mixed in with the words of God?

In the teachings of the Ahl al-Bayt (ʿa) (People of the House)[4] the answer to both these questions is a definitive ***no***. However, in the writings of the Ahl al-Ḥadīth, who derive their teachings and interpretations of Islam from sources other than the Sacred Progeny of the Holy Prophet (ṣ), we find that both questions are answered in the affirmative. They have narrated traditions

1. ***Tafsīr al-ʿAyyāshī***, vol. 1, pg, 388.
2. Ibn Saʿd, ***al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā***, vol. 1, pg. 131.
3. Refer to: Maʿrifat, Muḥammad Hādī, ***al-Tamhīd fī ʿUlūm al-Qur'ān***, vol.1, pg. 66.
4. The sacred progeny of the Holy Prophet (ṣ).

from the Holy Prophet (ṣ) which, if true, completely negate the infallibility of the Blessed Messenger of God (ṣ) and, thus, undermine the very phenomenon of prophethood itself.

Here we shall, as an example, mention two stories taken from the traditions of the Ahl al-Ḥadīth, and shall prove their falsehood using narrated and intellectual evidence.

The Tale of Waraqah ibn Nawfal

Waraqah ibn Nawfal was from amongst the cousins of Lady Khadījah (ʿa). He was a man of very moderate learning and had some idea about the history of God's messengers. It has been said about him that, "he was a reader of books (i.e. he could read) and had inclinations towards austere worship."[1] It is also mentioned that it was he who saved the Holy Prophet (ṣ) from denial and self-doubt at the very beginning of his prophetic mission. Al-Bukhārī, Muslim, Ibn Hishām and al-Ṭabarī have narrated this event as follows:

Muḥammad (ṣ) was alone in the cave of Ḥirā' and completely engrossed in meditation and worship; suddenly he heard a voice calling onto him. When he raised his head to see who the speaker was, he was confronted by a terrifying vision. Completely petrified, he turned his eyes away, but no matter where he looked he could not escape the glare of this horrifying being. In fact, the horrific apparition had filled every corner of the sky. Unable to tolerate the sheer magnitude of his own fear, Muḥammad (ṣ) fainted and remained as such for quite a while. Khadījah (Muḥammad's wife), worried about her husband's unusual delay, sent someone out to look for him but he was nowhere to be found. When he finally came back to his senses, he made his way back home. Muḥammad (ṣ) was shaken to the core and terrified out of his wits. Khadījah asked, "What has happened to you?"

He replied, "That which I feared most has come to pass. I have gone crazy!"

Khadījah continued, "Do not let yourself imagine bad thoughts. You are a man of God, and God will never forsake you. Indeed the future is bright."

Subsequently, she took him to the house of Waraqah ibn Nawfal so that his mind could be laid to ease. After listening to their story, Waraqah asked Muḥammad (ṣ) several questions. Having discovered their answers, he said, "Do not worry, this apparition was the messenger of God (the Archangel Gabriel), the same as He sent down upon Mūsā (ʿa). Today he has come

1. Ibn Hishām, ***al-Sīrah al-Nabawiyyah***, vol. 1, pg. 254: "Waraqah was Christian; he read books and listened to the people of the Torah and the Bible."
Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, vol. 1, pg. 3: "He was a Christian man during the Age of Ignorance (i.e. the pre-Islamic era) and used to write in Hebrew, and used to write from the Bible in Hebrew."

down upon you to affirm your prophethood."

They say that upon hearing this Muḥammad (ṣ) regained he composure and declared, "Now I know that I am a prophet (and not mad as I had previously believed)."

"Thus after this, he became calm once more, his fear left him, and he became satisfied that he was indeed a prophet."[1]

This fable, like numerous others similar to it, is a product of the perverse imagination of certain enemies of Islam who lived during the first Islamic century. Their goal, by fabricating such lies, was to preoccupy the minds of the masses and, simultaneously, corrupt the ideological foundations of the society's intellectual elite. The result was irreparable damage to Islam's fundamental beliefs.

Even in contemporary times, we have witnessed the enemies of Islam using this story, and others like it, to attack the roots of this great religion. One such example is the controversy of the *Satanic Verses*.

How could the prophet have failed to discern the reality of such an event after having felt the signs of prophethood within himself from the very beginning of his mortal life? How could such a man, gifted with a level of intellectual perfection unimaginable except through divine grace, allow himself to become paralyzed with self-doubt? How is it possible that the Prophet (ṣ), after supposedly having failed to understand the truth of his own experience, be led to satisfaction by the insinuations of a moderately literate man?

The contents of this story, apart from being totally incompatible with the very nature of the sacred office of prophethood, are also in opposition to the verses of the Holy Qur'ān and the traditions narrated from the Ahl al-Bayt (ʿa).

Al-Qāḍī ʿAyyāḍ[2] (deceased 544 A.H.) says:

> "It is impossible for Satan to acquire the appearance of an angel to deceive a prophet, be this in the beginning of his prophetic mission or

1. Haykal, Muḥammad Ḥasanayn, ***Ḥayāt Muḥammad***, pg. 95-96; ***Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim***, vol. 1, pg. 97-99; ***Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī***, vol. 1, pg. 3-4; Ibn Hishām, ***al-Sīrah al-Nabawiyyah***, vol. 1, pg. 252-255; Ṭabarī al-, Abū-Jaʿfar Muḥammad ibn Jarīr, ***Tārīkh al-Ṭabarī***, vol. 2, pg. 298-300; ***Jāmiʿ Al-Bayān*** (known as ***Jāmiʿ Al-BayānTafsīr al-Ṭabarī***), vol. 30, pg. 161.

2. Al-Qāḍī ʿAyyāḍ was from amongst the senior Andalusian scholars and academics. Ibn Khallakān says, "He was the *imām* of his time in the sciences of Ḥadīth, Arabic grammar and literature, history of the Arabs and their genealogies. He wrote many useful books." (***Wafiyyāt al-Aʿyān***, vol. 3, pg. 483)

later on. In fact, the total and solemn composure and self confidence, which radiated from the Holy Prophet (ṣ) during all such occasions, is in itself one of the many distinctive miracles of his prophethood. Indeed, a prophet is never struck by doubt or denial about that which is revealed unto him, nor does the appearance of an angel leave him flabbergasted, for God's wisdom demands that He bestow upon His messengers the utmost of certitude. He grants them perfect understanding of His message, so that His words are transferred completely and perfectly."[1]

Amīn al-Islām al-Ṭabarsī, in his exegesis of Sūrah al-Muddaththir, says:

"God does not send his revelations upon a prophet, except that they are accompanied by self evident proofs and crystal clear signs indicating that the source of these revelations is God himself and none other. These signs are such, that they totally negate the need of anything additional. Indeed, a prophet is never terrified, scared or shocked by what he receives."[2]

God, having bestowed His favor upon Prophet Mūsā (ʿa), spoke to him in this manner:

﴿ فَلَمَّآ أَتَىٰهَا نُودِيَ يَٰمُوسَىٰٓ ۝١١ إِنِّيٓ أَنَا۠ رَبُّكَ فَٱخۡلَعۡ نَعۡلَيۡكَۖ إِنَّكَ بِٱلۡوَادِ ٱلۡمُقَدَّسِ طُوٗىٰ ۝١٢ وَأَنَا ٱخۡتَرۡتُكَ فَٱسۡتَمِعۡ لِمَا يُوحَىٰٓ ۝١٣ إِنَّنِيٓ أَنَا ٱللَّهُ لَآ إِلَٰهَ إِلَّآ أَنَا۠ فَٱعۡبُدۡنِي وَأَقِمِ ٱلصَّلَوٰةَ لِذِكۡرِيٓ ﴾

"So when he came to it, a voice was uttered: O Musa: Surely I am your Lord, therefore put off your shoes; surely you are in the sacred valley, Tuwa, And I have chosen you, so listen to what is revealed: Surely I am Allah, there is no god but I, therefore serve Me and keep up prayer for My remembrance:"[3]

Subsequently, *Mūsā* (ʿa) was commanded thus:

﴿ وَأَلۡقِ عَصَاكَۚ فَلَمَّا رَءَاهَا تَهۡتَزُّ كَأَنَّهَا جَآنّٞ وَلَّىٰ مُدۡبِرٗا وَلَمۡ يُعَقِّبۡ ﴾

"And cast down your staff. So when he saw it in motion as if it were a serpent, he turned back retreating and did not return"[4]

Prophet Mūsā's reaction received God's disapproval and He addressed His Messenger in the following words:

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1. Al-Qāḍī ʿAyyāḍ, ***al-Shifā bi-Taʿrīf Ḥuqūq al-Muṣṭafā***, vol. 2, pg. 112; ***Sharḥ Mullā ʿAlī al-Qārī***, vol. 2, pg. 563.
2. Ṭabarsī, Abu'l-Faḍl, ***Majmaʿ Al-Bayān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*** (known as ***Tafsīr al-Ṭabarsī***), vol. 10, pg. 384.
3. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah Ṭā-Hā (20:11-14).
4. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Naml (27:10).

﴿ يَـٰمُوسَىٰ لَا تَخَفۡ إِنِّي لَا يَخَافُ لَدَيَّ ٱلۡمُرۡسَلُونَ ﴾

"O Musa! Fear not; surely the apostles shall not fear in My presence;"[1]

Herein, divine scripture has described a law, applicable to all prophets. Whoever occupies the sacred office of prophethood, finds himself in the protection of God's omnipotence. Therefore, by this realization, the prophet acquires a permanent state of tranquility and calmness.

In the case of the prophet Ibrāhīm (ʿa) (or Abraham), all veils were removed from his eyes to grant him serenity and certitude, and realities pertaining to the superior heavenly realm were made apparent to him.

﴿ وَكَذَٰلِكَ نُرِيٓ إِبۡرَٰهِيمَ مَلَكُوتَ ٱلسَّمَٰوَٰتِ وَٱلۡأَرۡضِ وَلِيَكُونَ مِنَ ٱلۡمُوقِنِينَ ﴾

"And thus did We show Ibrāhīm the kingdom of the heavens and the earth and that he might be of those who are sure."[2]

Having understood the above discussion, we must ask ourselves, "Why should the Holy Prophet's (ṣ) case be an exception to divine law? Is not such a proposition tantamount to considering the Holy Prophet (ṣ) inferior in comparison to Mūsā (ʿa) and Ibrāhīm (ʿa), because God chose to bestow upon them the blessing of certitude but denied the same to His last Messenger (ṣ)?"

The Commander of the Faithful[3] (Amīr al-Mu'minīn) is narrated to have said this about the Holy Prophet (ṣ):

> "God appointed for him the greatest of his angels. This angel would guide him continuously, by day and by night, to paths that lead towards the best and most virtuous behavior."[4]

Apart from the above critique, researchers have also highlighted several other contentious issues pertaining to this story:

1. The chain of narrators for this story is such that it does not reach back to an individual actually present during the proposed event. This fact renders the said tradition *mursalah."*[5]

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1. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Naml (27:10).
2. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Anʿām (6:75).
3. This title, according to the Shīʿah Muslims, is used exclusively for Imam ʿAlī ibn Abī-Ṭālib (ʿa).
4. ***Nahj al-Balāghah***, Sermon no. 192.
5. *Mursalah*, a terminology of ***ʿIlm al-Rijāl*** (study of the narrators of prophetic traditions), is used to signify any tradition wherein the chain of narrators is missing

2. The discrepancy that exists between the various versions of this tradition is in itself ample proof of it fallacious nature. In one of the narrated texts we see Khadījah going to see Waraqah alone, while in another narration we find Khadījah taking Muḥammad (ṣ) with her to see Waraqah. In a third version, Waraqah sees the Holy Prophet (ṣ) himself while the latter is engaged in ritual circumambulation of the Holy Kaʿbah and, having asked him several questions, informs him of his prophetic mission. Similarly, a fourth version informs us Abū-Bakr asked Lady Khadījah to send Muḥammad (ṣ) to see Waraqah.

These various disagreeing *adaptations* leave a researcher totally baffled about the veracity of this story.

3. In most of the narrated versions of this story, Waraqah, after having informed Muḥammad (ṣ) about his prophethood, declares, "If I live to witness the passing of this event (the public declaration of Muḥammad's prophetic mission) God knows that I shall surely help him..."

In another narration, he affirms, "If his prophethood is declared and I am alive, I shall surely respect him and aid him and believe in him wholeheartedly."

Similarly, Muḥammad Ibn Isḥāq, the famous Ashʿarite[1] biographer of the Holy Prophet (ṣ), reports the abovementioned declarations of Waraqah as proof of his unwavering faith in the prophetic mission of the Holy Messenger (ṣ)[2]. However, history proves that Waraqah remained alive well beyond the public declaration of the Holy Prophet's mission, and yet never converted to Islam, in fact, he died a disbeliever.

In a tradition narrated by Ibn ʿAbbās, it is reported that Waraqah died as a Christian. Ibn ʿAsākir, the author of *Tārīkh Madīnat Dimashq*, says, "I do not know a single individual who has ever testified that Waraqah ibn Nawfal converted to Islam."[3]

Ibn Ḥajar, quoting the text of *Tārīkh Ibn Bakkār*, writes, "One day Waraqah passed by Bilāl, while the latter had been stretched across upon the sand in punishment for his acceptance of Islam..."

He continues, "Thus, we see that Waraqah was still alive at that time, yet he did not embrace Islam."[4]

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the 'first transmitter' (someone actually narrating the account based on first hand information).

1. Al-Ashʿariyyah is a school of thought within Islamic theology.
2. Ibn Isḥāq, ***al-Sīrah***, pg. 123; Ibn Saʿd, ***al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā***, part 1, pg. 130.
3. Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, ***al-Iṣābah fi Maʿrifat al-Ṣaḥābah***, vol. 3, pg. 633.
4. Ibid, vol. 3, pg. 634.

All this proves that this story is more mythology than history, and therefore, has no academic value.

Fable of the Birds (The Satanic Verses)

Another example of these false concoctions, brewed up by the enemies of God and His Blessed Prophet (ṣ) and used by present day opponents of Islam, is the 'Story of the Birds', better known as the 'Satanic Verses'.

The fable is as follows:

"The Holy Prophet (ṣ) was deeply saddened, and indeed terrified, by the rift that had come into existence between him and his tribe (the Quraysh) as a result of his prophetic mission. One day, as he sat near the Holy Kaʿbah with a group of his tribesmen, reflecting upon this very issue, Sūrah al-Najm was revealed unto him. The Prophet (ṣ) began reciting the verses of this chapter, until he reached this section:

﴿ أَفَرَءَيْتُمُ ٱللَّٰتَ وَٱلْعُزَّىٰ ۝١٩ وَمَنَوٰةَ ٱلثَّالِثَةَ ٱلْأُخْرَىٰٓ ﴾

"Have you then considered the Lāt and the ʿUzzā, and Manāt, the third, the last?"[1]

It was here that Satan interfered into the process of revelation and, without the Prophet (ṣ) being aware of this penetration, added the following line:

"These beautiful birds (Gharānīq[2]*) that soar in the heavens above can surely intercede (on mankind's behalf)!"*

Once the idol worshipping polytheists of Makkah heard this sentence being recited by the Holy Prophet (ṣ), a verse that had in reality bestowed divine validation upon their own false gods, they completely changed their approach towards the religion of Islam. As a result, enmity between the Muslims and the infidels of Makkah turned into brotherhood and goodwill. Even the Muslims, who were at that time migrating to Abyssinia due to the persecution they faced in Makkah, returned to their own homeland and were welcomed warmly by their previous persecutors. The Prophet (ṣ), too, was greatly pleased by this occurrence. However, when the Prophet (ṣ) returned home that night, the archangel Gabriel descended upon him and asked him to recite that which had been revealed unto him by God. The Holy Prophet (ṣ) promptly complied, but when he reached the part that talked about the *birds*, the archangel forcefully rebuked him.

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1. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Najm (53:19-20).
2. The Arabic word *gharānīq* is the plural form of *ghurnūq* which literally means an energetic and beautiful young man. In actuality, it is the name of a light winged white and blue bird. Within the said sentence, the word is used to metaphorically denote the three famous idols mentioned in verse 19-20 of Sūrah al-Najm.

'What is this blasphemy you utter?' he cried.

It was only then that the Prophet (ṣ) realized what had happened[1].

Having understood that Satan had fooled him, he became terribly dismayed and disappointed. "Alas, I have associated fallacies to God, and have attributed to Him that which is not His sacred word. Alas, this is indeed a great failure!" he declared, deeply sorrowful and ashamed.

In other versions of this tale, we find the Holy Prophet (ṣ) addressing the archangel Gabriel, saying, "He who brought down these two verses upon me looked exactly like you," to which the archangel replied, "I seek refuge in God Almighty, indeed it is not so (surely it was not I who transmitted this blasphemy to you)." Upon hearing Jibrā'īl's reply, the Prophet (ṣ) became even more depressed. They say that the following verses of the Holy Qur'ān were, in fact, revealed in relation to this very event:

﴿كَادُواْ لَيَفۡتِنُونَكَ عَنِ ٱلَّذِيٓ أَوۡحَيۡنَآ إِلَيۡكَ لِتَفۡتَرِيَ عَلَيۡنَا غَيۡرَهُۥۖ وَإِذٗا لَّٱتَّخَذُوكَ خَلِيلٗا ٧٣
وَلَوۡلَآ أَن ثَبَّتۡنَٰكَ لَقَدۡ كِدتَّ تَرۡكَنُ إِلَيۡهِمۡ شَيۡـٔٗا قَلِيلًا ٧٤ إِذٗا لَّأَذَقۡنَٰكَ ضِعۡفَ ٱلۡحَيَوٰةِ وَضِعۡفَ
ٱلۡمَمَاتِ ثُمَّ لَا تَجِدُ لَكَ عَلَيۡنَا نَصِيرٗا ٧٥﴾

"And surely they had purposed to turn you away from that which We have revealed to you, that you should forge against Us other than that, and then they would certainly have taken you for a friend. And had it not been that We had already established you, you would certainly have been near to incline to them a little; In that case We would certainly have made you to taste a double (punishment) in this life and a double (punishment) after death, then you would not have found any helper against Us."[2]

These verses further amplified the Prophet's melancholy and remorse. Indeed, his extreme sadness and regret continued until God bestowed His mercy upon him and calmed him by way of the following revelation:

1. From this very point we see how false this story truly is. How could news of this supposed event have traveled with such speed, in that day and age, that it was able to reach Abyssinia within one day? And even if such news was able to reach Abyssinia, how were Muslim migrants able to return home in just one day? Please note that according to the narrators of this story, the archangel Gabriel successfully nullified the said sentence before the day had changed.
2. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Isrā' (17:73-75).

﴿ وَمَآ أَرۡسَلۡنَا مِن قَبۡلِكَ مِن رَّسُولٖ وَلَا نَبِيٍّ إِلَّآ إِذَا تَمَنَّىٰٓ أَلۡقَى ٱلشَّيۡطَٰنُ فِيٓ أُمۡنِيَّتِهِۦ فَيَنسَخُ ٱللَّهُ مَا يُلۡقِي ٱلشَّيۡطَٰنُ ثُمَّ يُحۡكِمُ ٱللَّهُ ءَايَٰتِهِۦۗ وَٱللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ حَكِيمٞ ﴾

"And We did not send before you any apostle or prophet, but when he desired, the Satan made a suggestion respecting his desire; but Allah annuls that which the Satan casts, then does Allah establish His communications, and Allah is Knowing, Wise,"[1]

Only then was the Prophet (ṣ) able to regain his natural tranquility."[2]

Not a single researcher from amongst Islamic scholars has ever given any credence to this story. In fact, they have declared it fake with complete unanimity.

Al-Qāḍī ʿAyyāḍ writes:

"This tradition has not been narrated in any of the books of *Ṣaḥīḥ*[3] and, furthermore, none of its transmitters are credible individuals. Similarly, there exist grave problems in the chain of narrators attached to this story. In fact, the only people to have narrated this fable are certain exegetes, known for their literalism, and certain historians, infamous for their compulsive narration of every bit of historical data regardless of its authenticity. Al-Qāḍī Bakr ibn al-ʿAlā' was absolutely correct when he declared that Muslims had been held hostage by such indiscriminate narrations, even though their authenticity is deeply questionable."[4]

Abū-Bakr ibn al-ʿArabī writes:

"Everything narrated by al-Ṭabarī with reference to this story is nothing but utter canard and has no roots in reality."[5]

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1. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Ḥajj (22:52).
2. ***Jāmiʿ Al-BayānTafsīr al-Ṭabarī***, vol. 17, pg. 131-134; Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suy***ūṭī, Al-Durr al-Manthūr***, vol. 4, pg. 194, 366-368; Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, ***Fatḥ al-Bārī Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī***, vol. 8, pg. 333.
3. *Ṣaḥīḥ* is a term used to signify a prophetic tradition that is authentic. In turn, books that were written as collections of such prophetic traditions (*aḥādīth*) were also called *Ṣaḥīḥ* (plural: *Ṣiḥāḥ*). However, this latter meaning (books regarded as authentic collections of *aḥādīth*) is a specifically Sunni usage of the word, who believe six such books to be authentic, chief amongst them being ***Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī***.
4. Al-Qāḍī ʿAyyāḍ, ***al-Shifā bi-Taʿrīf Ḥuqūq al-Muṣṭafā***, vol. 2, pg. 117.
5. ***Fatḥ al-Bārī, Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī***, vol. 8, pg. 333.

Similarly, Muḥammad ibn Isḥāq has written a treatise upon this matter and, therein, he proves this tale to be totally invalid and false.[1]

Muḥammad Ḥasanayn Haykal, too, has presented the essential discrepancies existing within this story with great eloquence and precision.[2]

It is not be necessary for us to narrate all the arguments that have been presented in negation of this fictitious account, because the absurdity of this story is apparent even in its own contents. This fact, itself, shows that the person responsible for concocting this fallacious tale performed his task very negligently. As the reader can see, the story starts with these verses of the Holy Qur'ān being revealed unto the Sacred Prophet (ṣ):

﴿ وَٱلنَّجۡمِ إِذَا هَوَىٰ ۝١ مَا ضَلَّ صَاحِبُكُمۡ وَمَا غَوَىٰ ۝٢ وَمَا يَنطِقُ عَنِ ٱلۡهَوَىٰٓ ۝٣ إِنۡ هُوَ إِلَّا وَحۡيٞ يُوحَىٰ ۝٤ عَلَّمَهُۥ شَدِيدُ ٱلۡقُوَىٰ ۝٥ ﴾

"I swear by the star when it goes down. Your companion does not err, nor does he go astray; Nor does he speak out of desire. It is naught but revelation that is revealed, The Lord of Mighty Power has taught him,"[3]

As can be clearly seen in these said verses, any possibility of Satan interfering into the process of revelation or tricking the Prophet (ṣ) into committing errors would lead to the negation of what God has declared herein. That would necessitate that Satan was able to defeat God's will, whereas we know that Satan is not but utter weakness. All strength belongs exclusively to God and, thus, it is impossible for His will to become subjugated. We find this message, without an iota of doubt, in the following verses of the Holy Qur'ān:

﴿ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُواْ يُقَٰتِلُونَ فِي سَبِيلِ ٱللَّهِۖ وَٱلَّذِينَ كَفَرُواْ يُقَٰتِلُونَ فِي سَبِيلِ ٱلطَّٰغُوتِ فَقَٰتِلُوٓاْ أَوۡلِيَآءَ ٱلشَّيۡطَٰنِۖ إِنَّ كَيۡدَ ٱلشَّيۡطَٰنِ كَانَ ضَعِيفًا ﴾

"Those who believe fight in the way of Allah, and those who disbelieve fight in the way of the Satan. Fight therefore against the friends of the Satan; surely the strategy of the Satan is weak."[4]

Especially when God uses the word "عزيز" (Exalted in Might/Indomitable) for Himself:

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1. Al-Fakhr al-Rāzī, ***al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr***, vol. 23, pg. 50.
2. ***Ḥayāt Muḥammad,*** pg. 124-129.
3. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Najm (53:1-5).
4. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Nisā' (4:76).

﴿كَتَبَ ٱللَّهُ لَأَغْلِبَنَّ أَنَا۠ وَرُسُلِيٓ ۚ إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ قَوِيٌّ عَزِيزٌ﴾

"Allah has written down: I will most certainly prevail, I and My apostles; surely Allah is Strong, Mighty."[1]

Furthermore, the Holy Qur'ān clearly declares:

﴿إِنَّهُۥ لَيْسَ لَهُۥ سُلْطَٰنٌ عَلَى ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا۟ وَعَلَىٰ رَبِّهِمْ يَتَوَكَّلُونَ﴾

"Surely he has no authority over those who believe and rely on their Lord."[2]

﴿إِنَّ عِبَادِى لَيْسَ لَكَ عَلَيْهِمْ سُلْطَٰنٌ ۚ وَكَفَىٰ بِرَبِّكَ وَكِيلًا﴾

"Surely (as for) My servants, you have no authority over them; and your Lord is sufficient as a Protector."[3]

Similarly, we find Satan himself testifying to this fact:

﴿وَقَالَ ٱلشَّيْطَٰنُ لَمَّا قُضِىَ ٱلْأَمْرُ إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ وَعَدَكُمْ وَعْدَ ٱلْحَقِّ وَوَعَدتُّكُمْ فَأَخْلَفْتُكُمْ ۖ وَمَا كَانَ لِىَ عَلَيْكُم مِّن سُلْطَٰنٍ إِلَّآ أَن دَعَوْتُكُمْ فَٱسْتَجَبْتُمْ لِى ۖ فَلَا تَلُومُونِى وَلُومُوٓا۟ أَنفُسَكُم ۖ مَّآ أَنَا۠ بِمُصْرِخِكُمْ وَمَآ أَنتُم بِمُصْرِخِىَّ ۖ إِنِّى كَفَرْتُ بِمَآ أَشْرَكْتُمُونِ مِن قَبْلُ ۗ إِنَّ ٱلظَّٰلِمِينَ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ﴾

"And the Satan shall say after the affair is decided: Surely Allah promised you the promise of truth, and I gave you promises, then failed to keep them to you, and I had no authority over you, except that I called you and you obeyed me, therefore do not blame me but blame yourselves: I cannot be your aider (now) nor can you be my aiders; surely I disbelieved in your associating me with Allah before; surely it is the unjust that shall have the painful punishment."[4]

Given the irrefutable stance of the Holy Qur'ān in this matter, we must conclude that there exists no possibility of Satan being able to interfere in such issues. Deceiving the Prophet (ṣ) into committing acts contrary to his prophetic mission is categorically beyond Satan's capability.

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1. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Mujādilah (58:21).
2. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Naḥl (16:99).
3. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Isrā' (17:65).
4. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah Ibrāhīm (14:22).

God has guaranteed the veracity and irrefutability of the Holy Qur'ān by declaring:

﴿إِنَّا نَحْنُ نَزَّلْنَا ٱلذِّكْرَ وَإِنَّا لَهُۥ لَحَٰفِظُونَ﴾

"Surely We have revealed the Reminder and We will most surely be its guardian."[1]

And, similarly:

﴿لَّا يَأْتِيهِ ٱلْبَٰطِلُ مِنۢ بَيْنِ يَدَيْهِ وَلَا مِنْ خَلْفِهِۦ ۖ تَنزِيلٌ مِّنْ حَكِيمٍ حَمِيدٍ﴾

"Falsehood shall not come to it from before it nor from behind it; a revelation from the Wise, the Praised One."[2]

Therefore, we understand that the Holy Qur'ān is to remain protected throughout time. No one can create additions or deletions in its text. Given this fact, how is it possible for us to assume that Satan gained access to such power that allowed him to introduce changes into the contents of this sacred scripture?

Apart from all this, we also know that the Holy Prophet (ṣ) was protected from all errors by divine decree, especially regarding to the transmission of God's word to humanity. He had been guaranteed heavenly protection and support, without exception, and because of this very fact we find the Holy Qur'ān addressing him in the following manner:

﴿وَٱصْبِرْ لِحُكْمِ رَبِّكَ فَإِنَّكَ بِأَعْيُنِنَا ۖ وَسَبِّحْ بِحَمْدِ رَبِّكَ حِينَ تَقُومُ﴾

"And wait patiently for the judgment of your Lord, for surely you are before Our eyes, and sing the praise of your Lord when you rise;"[3]

Furthermore, we know it to be true that the Holy Prophet (ṣ) was the most eloquent of all the Arabs. As he himself declares,

> "I am the most eloquent of you in the pronunciation of (the Arabic alphabet) *ḍād* 'ض'[4]."

Given this fact, it is but natural that he was able to easily distinguish between divine revelation (which by definition occupies the very zenith of eloquence

1. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Ḥijr (15:9).
2. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah Fuṣṣilat (41:42).
3. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Ṭūr (52:48).
4. This is a metaphorical expression indicating the speakers command over the Arabic language.

and beauty with regard to both structure and content) and words hailing from non-divine sources. Especially when such words are positioned in a manner that they clearly stick out as incongruent with the rest of the text, as is the case herein. Once we read the verses before and immediately after the supposedly satanic additions, we see that the proposed sentence has no co-relation to these other verses. In fact, its contents are completely contradictory to the entire theme of the verses that surround it. The twenty-third verse of the same chapter is as follows:

﴿ إِنۡ هِيَ إِلَّآ أَسۡمَآءٞ سَمَّيۡتُمُوهَآ أَنتُمۡ وَءَابَآؤُكُم مَّآ أَنزَلَ ٱللَّهُ بِهَا مِن سُلۡطَٰنٍۚ إِن يَتَّبِعُونَ إِلَّا ٱلظَّنَّ وَمَا تَهۡوَى ٱلۡأَنفُسُۖ وَلَقَدۡ جَآءَهُم مِّن رَّبِّهِمُ ٱلۡهُدَىٰٓ ﴾

"They are naught but names which you have named, you and your fathers; Allah has not sent for them any authority. They follow naught but conjecture and the low desires which (their) souls incline to; and certainly the guidance has come to them from their Lord."[1]

Herein, God declares that the manmade deities of the polytheists are nothing but baseless figments of human imagination. How is possible that a person endowed with such command over spoken Arabic, fails to see the obvious inconsistency and contrariety that exists between these divine verses and the words supposedly inserted into the chapter by Satan? Subsequently, even if we assume that such a gaffe took place, how is it possible that the polytheist tribe of Quraysh came to accept this sentence as a validation of their own gods and creed, while they knew that the rest of the same chapter was so obviously, and unabatedly, attacking their dogmatic beliefs? In fact, when we analyze the remainder of this Qur'ānic chapter, we find nothing but unrelenting criticism and condemnation of Quraysh's manmade belief system and their false gods. Having understood the self- evident inconsistency and irresolvable mutual contradiction that is inherent to this saga, every sane individual would conclude that this story is nothing but mere fiction.

As for the two other verses presented by the Ahl al-Ḥadīth as confirmatory evidence in support of this story, it is most clear that they have no relationship whatsoever to the contents of this yarn.

1. The first verse was as follows:

1. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Najm (53:23).

﴿ وَمَآ أَرۡسَلۡنَا مِن قَبۡلِكَ مِن رَّسُولٖ وَلَا نَبِيٍّ إِلَّآ إِذَا تَمَنَّىٰٓ أَلۡقَى ٱلشَّيۡطَٰنُ فِيٓ أُمۡنِيَّتِهِۦ فَيَنسَخُ ٱللَّهُ مَا يُلۡقِي ٱلشَّيۡطَٰنُ ثُمَّ يُحۡكِمُ ٱللَّهُ ءَايَٰتِهِۦۗ وَٱللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ حَكِيمٞ ﴾

"And We did not send before you any apostle or prophet, but when he desired, the Satan made a suggestion respecting his desire; but Allah annuls that which the Satan casts, then does Allah establish His communications, and Allah is Knowing, Wise,"[1]

This verse relates the fact that every prophet yearns to see his hard work and effort bear fruit. He seeks to see God's name and word glorified on Earth, but Satan continuously tries to hamper his efforts and creates obstructions in the path of his success. However, since all strength and indomitable might is for God, and Satan is, in his very essence, weak and feeble, every obstacle he creates in opposition to God's messengers is destroyed by the will of the Almighty.

﴿بَلۡ نَقۡذِفُ بِٱلۡحَقِّ عَلَى ٱلۡبَٰطِلِ فَيَدۡمَغُهُۥ فَإِذَا هُوَ زَاهِقٞۚ وَلَكُمُ ٱلۡوَيۡلُ مِمَّا تَصِفُونَ﴾

"Nay! We cast the truth against the falsehood, so that it breaks its head, and lo! it vanishes; and woe to you for what you describe;"[2]

Therefore, despite Satan's interference, the message of God reaches humanity in total clarity.

2. The second verse is as follows:

﴿وَإِن كَادُواْ لَيَفۡتِنُونَكَ عَنِ ٱلَّذِيٓ أَوۡحَيۡنَآ إِلَيۡكَ لِتَفۡتَرِيَ عَلَيۡنَا غَيۡرَهُۥۖ وَإِذٗا لَّٱتَّخَذُوكَ خَلِيلٗا ٧٣ وَلَوۡلَآ أَن ثَبَّتۡنَٰكَ لَقَدۡ كِدتَّ تَرۡكَنُ إِلَيۡهِمۡ شَيۡـٔٗا قَلِيلًا ٧٤ إِذٗا لَّأَذَقۡنَٰكَ ضِعۡفَ ٱلۡحَيَوٰةِ وَضِعۡفَ ٱلۡمَمَاتِ ثُمَّ لَا تَجِدُ لَكَ عَلَيۡنَا نَصِيرٗا ﴾

"And surely they had purposed to turn you away from that which We have revealed to you, that you should forge against Us other than that, and then they would certainly have taken you for a friend. And had it not been that We had already established you, you would certainly have been near to incline to them a little; In that case We would certainly have made you to taste a double (punishment) in this life and a double (punishment) after death, then you would not have found any

1. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Ḥajj (22:52).
2. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Anbiyā' (21:18).

helper against Us."[1]

This verse, also known as the "verse of confirmation," pertains to the affirmation of the infallibility of prophets. Infallibility is, in fact, a divine gift that enables a prophet to successfully complete his mission by protecting him from error and deviation. If it were not for this divine blessing, it would be impossible for a prophet to ensure the completion of his heavenly duty; because even the most sincere of people can fall prey to complex conspiratorial webs sown by selfish individuals seeking to exploit a given situation. This fact is part and parcel of human nature, and knowing this, God endows upon his selected messenger the gift of infallibility, that renders him immune to all such exploitations and deviations. In short, this verse, rather than being evidence in support of this slanderous fable, is in reality proof that no such event could ever have taken place. The structure of the verse is such that it incorporates a self-sufficing stipulation [لولا] that is used to indicate the inherent impossibility of a given event.

Muḥammad Ḥasanayn Haykal writes, "Incorporating the said verse actually proves the contrary of what the proponents of this story have intended to establish. This is because the given verse does not seek to report an event, but rather seeks to avow the resoluteness of God's messengers."

Furthermore, with regard to verse 52 of the Sūrah al-Ḥajj, Haykal says, "This verse has no relationship or relevance, whatsoever, with the fable in question."[2]

Essentially, the given verse intends to inform all Muslims that they are continuously the focus of God's mercy, but if they choose to go astray and abandon the path of God, the natural effect of such a decision will be destruction in this world and in the hereafter.

Scribes of Divine Revelation

Apparently, the Holy Prophet (ṣ) was unlettered. He was not known amongst his contemporaries as someone who knew how to read or write, because no one had ever seen him do either. In fact they assigned him the title *ummī* (أمي) or *untaught* for this very reason. The Holy Qur'ān has also addressed him by this title:

﴿ ٱلَّذِينَ يَتَّبِعُونَ ٱلرَّسُولَ ٱلنَّبِيَّ ٱلْأُمِّيَّ ٱلَّذِى يَجِدُونَهُۥ مَكْتُوبًا عِندَهُمْ فِى ٱلتَّوْرَىٰةِ وَٱلْإِنجِيلِ
يَأْمُرُهُم بِٱلْمَعْرُوفِ وَيَنْهَىٰهُمْ عَنِ ٱلْمُنكَرِ وَيُحِلُّ لَهُمُ ٱلطَّيِّبَٰتِ وَيُحَرِّمُ عَلَيْهِمُ ٱلْخَبَٰٓئِثَ وَيَضَعُ

1. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Isrā' (17:73-75).
2. ***Ḥayāt Muḥammad,*** pg. 124-129.

عَنْهُمْ إِصْرَهُمْ وَٱلْأَغْلَٰلَ ٱلَّتِى كَانَتْ عَلَيْهِمْ ۚ فَٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا۟ بِهِۦ وَعَزَّرُوهُ وَنَصَرُوهُ وَٱتَّبَعُوا۟ ٱلنُّورَ ٱلَّذِىٓ أُنزِلَ مَعَهُۥٓ ۙ أُو۟لَٰٓئِكَ هُمُ ٱلْمُفْلِحُونَ ﴿١٥٧﴾ قُلْ يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلنَّاسُ إِنِّى رَسُولُ ٱللَّهِ إِلَيْكُمْ جَمِيعًا ٱلَّذِى لَهُۥ مُلْكُ ٱلسَّمَٰوَٰتِ وَٱلْأَرْضِ ۖ لَآ إِلَٰهَ إِلَّا هُوَ يُحْىِۦ وَيُمِيتُ ۖ فَـَٔامِنُوا۟ بِٱللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ ٱلنَّبِىِّ ٱلْأُمِّىِّ ٱلَّذِى يُؤْمِنُ بِٱللَّهِ وَكَلِمَٰتِهِۦ وَٱتَّبِعُوهُ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَهْتَدُونَ ﴿١٥٨﴾ ﴾

"Those who follow the Apostle-Prophet, the Ummi, whom they find written down with them in the Torah and the Gospel (who) enjoins them good and forbids them evil, and makes lawful to them the good things and makes unlawful to them impure things, and removes from them their burden and the shackles which were upon them; so (as for) those who believe in him and honor him and help him, and follow the light which has been sent down with him, these it is that are the successful. Say: O people! surely I am the Apostle of Allah to you all, of Him Whose is the kingdom of the heavens and the earth there is no god but He; He brings to life and causes to die therefore believe in Allah and His apostle, the Ummi Prophet who believes in Allah and His words, and follow him so that you may walk in the right way."[1]

The Arabic word *ummī* is an adjective that literally means something attributed to a mother. It is used for someone who, in one way or the other, bears similarity to a newborn baby only just separated from the maternal womb. The fact that the Holy Prophet (ṣ) had never seen any tutelage, and had never undergone any formal or informal education, could be the reason why he acquired this particular title.

Another opinion about this word, held by experts of the Arabic language, is that it means something attributed to *ummu'l-qurā* (mother of the villages) or the city of Makkah. As such, it can be used to signify any Makkan citizen. In the Holy Qur'ān, other morphological versions of this word have also been used:

﴿هُوَ ٱلَّذِى بَعَثَ فِى ٱلْأُمِّيِّـۧنَ رَسُولًا مِّنْهُمْ يَتْلُوا۟ عَلَيْهِمْ ءَايَٰتِهِۦ وَيُزَكِّيهِمْ وَيُعَلِّمُهُمُ ٱلْكِتَٰبَ وَٱلْحِكْمَةَ وَإِن كَانُوا۟ مِن قَبْلُ لَفِى ضَلَٰلٍ مُّبِينٍ ﴾

"He it is Who raised among the inhabitants of Makkah an Apostle from among themselves, who recites to them His communications and purifies them, and teaches them the Book and the Wisdom, although they were before certainly in clear error,"[2]

1. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Aʿrāf (7:157-158).
2. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Jumuʿah (62:2).

It is possible that the intended meaning of this word, in this instance, be the second, of the two elaborated, upon above. Nevertheless, most analysts have concluded that the first meaning is the applicable one. This popular opinion also seems to be in line with all other instances of the word's usage in the Holy Qur'ān:

﴿وَمِنْهُمْ أُمِّيُّونَ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ ٱلْكِتَٰبَ إِلَّآ أَمَانِيَّ وَإِنْ هُمْ إِلَّا يَظُنُّونَ﴾

"And there are among them illiterates who know not the Book but only lies, and they do but conjecture."[1]

It seems that in the above quoted verse, the sentence *"who know not the Book"* has been incorporated in explanation of the word *ummiyyūna* (امیّون). We know that one key factor that differentiated the Arabs from the Ahl al-Kitāb (People of the Book) was that the latter were literate and knew how to read and write. This, along with the tradition of the Holy Prophet (ṣ) wherein he says, "We are a people who know not how to write or calculate,"[2] lends support to the hypothesis that the word *ummī*, herein, does indeed mean unlettered.

Here, we must point out that the miraculous nature of the Holy Qur'ān (with its unsurpassable eloquence) is invariably connected to the Holy Prophet (ṣ) being unlettered i.e. he was never seen reading or writing. However, this miracle does not demand, nor does it indicate, that the Holy Prophet (ṣ) be illiterate.

This verse is, indeed, proof that the Holy Prophet (ṣ) never read or wrote a single word. However, it does not, in any way, indicate that he was illiterate. The fact of the matter is that the Qur'ān has said nothing about the Holy Prophet (ṣ) being unable to read or write, it has merely proclaimed that he never actually engaged in these activities. This purposeful act of the Holy Prophet (ṣ) effectively blocked the path of all individuals seeking to claim that the Holy Qur'ān was a product of his own handiwork. They all assumed him to be illiterate, simply because they had no evidence to the contrary. Therefore, they found themselves trapped into admitting that the Holy Qur'ān could not have been a result of Muḥammad's (ṣ) penmanship.

Shaykh Abū-Jaʿfar al-Ṭūsī, in his exegesis of the Holy Qur'ān, explains this verse in the following manner:

"Some exegetes have proclaimed that the Prophet (ṣ) knew not how to read or write, but the said verse does not indicate this in any way. The verse simply declares that the Prophet (ṣ) never actually engaged in reading or

1. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Baqarah (2:78).
2. Al-Fakhr al-Rāzī, ***al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr***, vol. 15, pg. 23.

writing. We know it to be possible for a person to refrain from such acts even though he has, in himself, the ability to perform them. We also know that if a person were to stringently refrain himself from such actions, all onlookers, uniformed of his actual intent, would assume him to be devoid of the very ability of reading and writing. Therefore, it is concluded that this verse should be understood as such: The Holy Prophet (ṣ) never read or wrote a single word, and his habit was to disengage himself from all such activities."[1]

ʿAllāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī writes:

"Apparently, the verse seeks to negate the habit (of reading and writing for the Prophet, as opposed to negating his capability in performing these said actions) and this fits in well with the overall argument being presented therein."[2]

Apart from the arguments presented above, we also know that the ability to read and write is, in itself, a plenitude and perfection, whereas illiteracy is counted amongst flaws and deficiencies. Prophets are the epitome of human perfection, and they gain this state directly from God without the intervention of any other source. Thus, the fact that the Holy Prophet (ṣ) never received any formal or informal education cannot be seen as evidence of his illiteracy, but is indeed proof of quite the opposite. Lack of tutelage is proof of the Holy Prophet's self-sufficiency in knowledge, not evidence of his illiteracy. His insistence upon not reading and not writing was to preemptively neutralize all conspiracies against his sacred mission.

This was the reason why he employed select scribes to do his work for him. In fact, he was very particular in choosing only the best from amongst the educated of Makkah and al-Madīnah. The first such person, selected in Makkah when Islam was still in its nascent stages, was Imam ʿAlī ibn Abī-Ṭālib (ʿa) and he remained the Holy Prophet's most trusted scribe right until the end of the Apostle's blessed worldly life. The Prophet (ṣ) always insisted that ʿAlī (ʿa) should write down every bit of divine revelation, meticulously, so that the latter could achieve total familiarity with every last bit of God's word. Sulaym ibn Qays al-Hilālī, from amongst the first generation of disciples,[3] says:

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1. Ṭūsī al-, Abū-Jaʿfar (famously known as Shaykh al-Ṭūsī), ***Al-Tibyān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān***, vol. 8, pg. 193.
2. Al-Ṭabāṭabā'ī, ***al-Mīzān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān***, vol. 16, pg. 145.
3. Translator's Note: The "first generation of disciples" is a phrase used to signify the first generation of people who learnt the Qur'ān and the *aḥādīth*, not from the Prophet (ṣ) himself, but from the companions of the Prophet, after his passing away.

I was in the Grand Mosque of al-Kūfah (Masjid al-Kūfah) with ʿAlī ibn Abī-Ṭālib (ʿa) and the people had gathered around him. At this time ʿAlī (ʿa) addressed them and said,

> 'Ask me whatever questions you may have. Ask me before I am no longer in your midst. Ask me about the Book of God, for I swear upon His name, never was a single verse revealed unto the Holy Prophet (ṣ) that he did not, in turn, recite it for me, teach me its exegesis and relate for me its allegorical meanings.'

Therefore, one of ʿAlī's disciples named Ibn al-Kawwā, whose real name was ʿAbdullāh ibn ʿAmr al-Yashkurī and was truly a learned and wise man, asked ʿAlī this question, "What about the verses that were revealed unto the Prophet (ṣ) when you were not present with him?"

ʿAlī (ʿa) replied,

> "Whenever I returned back to his company he would say, 'O ʿAlī! The Lord has sent down new words upon me.' He would then proceed, immediately, to recite these verses and would promptly teach me their apparent and inner meanings."[1]

The first person to hold this office and responsibility in the Madīnite period of the Prophet's mission was Ubayy ibn Kaʿb al-Anṣārī. He was literate even in the Age of Ignorance (the pre-Islamic era) preceding the advent of Islam. Muḥammad ibn Saʿd remarks, "The ability to write was very rare amongst the Arabs, and Ubayy ibn Kaʿb was from among the very few people who knew how to do so."[2]

Ibn ʿAbd al-Barr says, "Ubayy ibn Kaʿb was the first person to become the Prophet's scribe in al-Madīnah, and he was also the first person to end each written text with the phrase 'inscribed by such and such'."[3]

Ubayy was from amongst the select individuals who had received the whole body of Qur'ānic verses from the Holy Prophet (ṣ). Similarly, he was present and dutifully engaged in his task right up to the last revealed verse of this sacred message. This was the reason why, during the re-collection and standardization of the Qur'ānic codex during ʿUthmān's reign, Ubayy was appointed as the head of the committee engaged in this task. Whenever there appeared a disagreement with regard to this standardization, Ubayy*'s*

1. Hilālī al-, Sulaym ibn Qays; ***al-Saqīfah,*** pg. 213-214.
2. Ibn Saʿd, ***al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā***, vol. 3, part 2, pg. 59.
3. Ibn Ḥajar, ***al-Iṣābah***, vol. 1, pg. 19; Ibn ʿAbd al-Barr al-Qurṭubī, ***al-Istīʿāb fī Maʿrifat al-Aṣḥāb***, vol. 1, pg. 50-51.

opinion would be adopted as the correct one.[1]

Zayd ibn Thābit, another scribe appointed by the Holy Prophet (ṣ) in al-Madīnah, lived in his neighborhood. In the beginning, the Prophet (ṣ) would only call him into service when Ubayy was unavailable, but slowly and steadily Zayd too became a permanent scribe. The Holy Prophet (ṣ) even had him learn Hebrew so that he could handle all his correspondence in this particular language. In time, Zayd grew to be the most frequently used of all the scribes, even though his main activity was to handle the Prophet's (ṣ) mail.[2]

Therefore the most prominent scribes of the Holy Prophet (ṣ) were ʿAlī ibn Abī-Ṭālib (ʿa), Ubayy ibn Kaʿb and Zayd ibn Thābit.

Ibn al-Athīr writes, "One of the scribes of the Holy Prophet (ṣ) was ʿAbdullāh ibn Arqam. He was responsible for the Messenger's letters, while responsibility for treaties and formal agreements rested with ʿAlī ibn Abī-Ṭālib (ʿa)."

He continues, "People who would, from time to time, act as scribes for the Holy Prophet (ṣ) were: the first three caliphs, al-Zubayr ibn al-ʿAwwām, Khālid and Abān (the sons of Saʿīd ibn al-ʿĀṣ), Ḥanẓalah al-Asadī, al-ʿAlā' ibn al-Khaḍramī, Khālid ibn al-Walīd, ʿAbdullāh ibn Rawāḥah, Muḥammad ibn Muslimah, ʿAbdullāh ibn Abī-Salūl, al-Mughīrah ibn Shuʿbah, ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ, Muʿāwiyah ibn Abī-Sufyān, Juham (or Juhaym) ibn al-Ṣalt, Muʿayqib ibn Abī-Fāṭimah and Shūrāḥbīl ibn Ḥasnah."

Ibn al-Athīr goes on to say, "The first from amongst the people of the Quraysh tribe to be employed as the Prophet's scribe was ʿAbdullāh ibn Saʿd ibn Abī-Suraḥ. He later turned apostate and fled back to Makkah. Verse 93 of Sūrah al-Anʿām was revealed in reference to him:[3]

1. ***Al-Tamhīd***, vol. 1, pg. 340-348; al-Sajistānī, ***al-Maṣāḥif,*** pg. 30.
2. Ibn al-Athīr, ***Usd al-Ghābah fī Maʿrifat al-Ṣaḥābah***, vol. 1, pg. 50; Ibn ʿAbd al-Barr, ***al-Istīʿāb***, vol. 1, pg. 50; al-Sajistānī, ***al-Maṣāḥif,*** pg. 3; Ibn Saʿd, ***al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā***, vol. 2, pg. 115.
3. Ibn al-Athīr, ***Usd al-Ghābah fī Maʿrifat al-Ṣaḥābah***, vol. 1, pg. 50.

﴿وَمَنْ أَظْلَمُ مِمَّنِ ٱفْتَرَىٰ عَلَى ٱللَّهِ كَذِبًا أَوْ قَالَ أُوحِيَ إِلَيَّ وَلَمْ يُوحَ إِلَيْهِ شَيْءٌ وَمَن قَالَ سَأُنزِلُ مِثْلَ مَآ أَنزَلَ ٱللَّهُ ۗ وَلَوْ تَرَىٰٓ إِذِ ٱلظَّٰلِمُونَ فِي غَمَرَٰتِ ٱلْمَوْتِ وَٱلْمَلَٰٓئِكَةُ بَاسِطُوٓا۟ أَيْدِيهِمْ أَخْرِجُوٓا۟ أَنفُسَكُمُ ۖ ٱلْيَوْمَ تُجْزَوْنَ عَذَابَ ٱلْهُونِ بِمَا كُنتُمْ تَقُولُونَ عَلَى ٱللَّهِ غَيْرَ ٱلْحَقِّ وَكُنتُمْ عَنْ ءَايَٰتِهِۦ تَسْتَكْبِرُونَ﴾

"And who is more unjust than he who forges a lie against Allah, or says: It has been revealed to me; while nothing has been revealed to him, and he who says: I can reveal the like of what Allah has revealed? and if you had seen when the unjust shall be in the agonies of death and the angels shall spread forth their hands: Give up your souls; today shall you be recompensed with an ignominious chastisement because you spoke against Allah other than the truth and (because) you showed pride against His communications."[1]

Apparently, these were the people from amongst the Arabs of that time who knew how to read and write, and thus, the Prophet (ṣ) would continually call them into his service whenever the need presented itself. However, the three above mentioned individuals, with the addition of Ibn Arqam, were the only permanent and formal scribes at the Holy Prophet's disposal.

Ibn Abi'l-Ḥadīd says, "Biographers of the Holy Prophet (ṣ), along with other researchers, have reported that ʿAlī, Zayd ibn Thābit and Zayd ibn Arqam were the only people responsible for writing down and recording divine revelation. Ḥanẓalah ibn Rabīʿ al-Tamīmī and Muʿāwiyah were appointed to handle the Prophet's correspondences, other documents of public importance, property lists and calculations regarding purchases and alms."[2]

Abū-ʿAbdullāh al-Zanjānī has listed over forty individuals who acted, at one time or the other, as scribes for the Holy Prophet (ṣ).

Al-Bulādharī, in the conclusion of his book *Futūḥ al-Buldān*, has quoted al-Wāfidī as such: "At the time of the advent of Islam, seventeen individuals from amongst the Quraysh knew how to write. These were: ʿAlī ibn Abī-Ṭālib, ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, ʿUthmān ibn ʿAffān, Abū-ʿUbaydah ibn al-Jarrāḥ, Ṭalḥah ibn ʿUbaydullāh, Yazīd ibn Abī-Sufyān, Abū-Ḥudhayfah ibn ʿUtbah ibn Rabīʿah, al-Ḥaṭṭab ibn ʿAmr (brother of Suhayl ibn ʿAmr al-ʿĀmirī), Abū-Salamah ibn ʿAbd al-Asad al-Makhzūmī, Abān ibn Saʿīd ibn al-ʿĀṣ ibn Umayyah, his brother Khālid ibn Saʿīd, ʿAbdullāh ibn Saʿd ibn

1. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Anʿām (6:93).
2. Ibn Abi'l-Ḥadīd, ***Sharḥ Nahj al-Balāghah***, vol. 1, pg. 338.

Abī-Suraḥ, Huwayṭib ibn ʿAbd al-ʿUzzā, Abū-Sufyān ibn Ḥarb, Muʿāwiyah ibn Abī-Sufyān, Juhaym ibn al-Ṣalt and, from the relatives of the Quraysh, al-ʿAlā' ibn al-Khaḍramī."

From amongst the literate women of that time, we find Ummu-Kulthūm bint (i.e. the daughter of) ʿUqbah, Karīmah bint al-Miqdād and al-Shifā bint ʿAbdullāh. By the command of the Prophet (ṣ), al-Shifā taught Ḥafṣah how to write and, from then onwards, Ḥafṣah too was counted from amongst literate individuals. Ummu-Salamah, the blessed lady, and ʿĀ'ishah were able to read but could not write.

In al-Madīnah, Sā'is ibn ʿUbādah, al-Mundhir ibn ʿAmr, Ubayy ibn Kaʿb, Zayd ibn Thābit, Rāfiʿ ibn Mālik, Usayd ibn Ḥaḍayr, Maʿan ibn ʿAdī, Bashīr ibn Saʿd, Saʿd ibn Rabīʿah, Aws ibn Khiwallā and ʿAbdullāh ibn Ubayy were those who could write.[1]

In the era of the Prophet (ṣ), various materials were used as mediums upon which texts could be inscribed. The only criteria in choosing such mediums would be ease of availability and the medium's inherent characteristics which made it possible for words to be written on it. The most popular mediums were as follows:

1. *ʿusub* (عُسُب), plural of *ʿasīb* (عَسيب) meaning the spine of a date-palm leaf with the actual leaf wings removed. It was used in a manner that its broad end became the medium upon which texts were inscribed.
2. *likhāf* (لِخاف), plural of *lakhfah* (لَخْفة) which means a thin white stone.
3. *riqā* (رِقاع), plural of *ruqʿah* (رُقْعة) meaning a piece of animal hide, or a leaf, or a piece of paper.
4. *udum* (أُدُم), plural of *adīm* (أديم) meaning a piece of animal hide especially prepared for writing.

After being written, the verses of the Holy Qur'ān were handed over for storage to the Holy Prophet (ṣ) who kept them safely within the confines of his home. If one of the companions desired to have a Qur'ānic chapter, or a few verses, written down for himself, he would make a copy of the same from the texts preserved with the Holy Prophet (ṣ). The companions, who made such copies, normally did so upon pieces of cloth, so that they could be hung upon walls within their respective residences.

All verses were arranged, sorted and allocated a specific position within relevant Qur'ānic chapters. The beginning of each chapter was signified by the revelation of the sentence: *In the name of Allah, Most Beneficent, Most Merciful* and its end was marked by the descent of a subsequent instance of the same. Thus, each chapter was recorded and preserved independently and

1. Bulādharī al-, Abu'l-Ḥasan, ***Futūḥ al-Buldān,*** pg 457-460.

separately with its beginning, contents and end clearly defined. However, during the time of the Holy Prophet (ṣ), the sequence of Qur'ānic chapters themselves had not yet been formally specified.

ʿAllāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī remarks, "The Holy Qur'ān, as it is today, did not exist at the time of the Holy Prophet (ṣ). All that existed were scattered Qur'ānic chapters, without any formal sequence, as well as isolated verses held by separate individuals."[1]

1. ***Al-Mīzān***, vol. 3, pg. 78-79.

CHAPTER TWO:
THE DESCENT OF THE QUR'ĀN

The Qur'ān is in reality a collection of all the verses and Qur'ānic chapters that descended upon the Holy Prophet (ṣ). This descent started in Makkah, before the Prophet (ṣ) migrated to al-Madīnah, and continued throughout his life until he finally bid farewell to this temporal plane. Verses, or even whole chapters, would be revealed in relation to particular circumstances, which came into being during the Holy Messenger's lifetime. These circumstances included problems that the Muslims faced in that era, or even queries and criticisms that were hurled upon Islam by its many opponents. These various scenarios, which form the contextual background of divine revelation, are termed *sha'n al-nuzūl* (Circumstance of Descent) or *asbāb al-nuzūl* (Reasons of Descent). In many places within the Qur'ān, this contextual background is of vital importance for anyone seeking to determine the correct meaning of a given verse.

However, this continual and rather scattered modality of descent makes the Holy Qur'ān stand out distinctively amongst all the divine scriptures revealed by God before it. The Scriptures of Ibrāhīm and the Tablets of Mūsā were revealed all at once, but the descent of the Qur'ān was not so. It was this very fact that created numerous questions within the minds of the disbelievers. The Holy Qur'ān narrates their queries, along with God's reply, as such:

﴿ وَقَالَ ٱلَّذِينَ كَفَرُواْ لَوۡلَا نُزِّلَ عَلَيۡهِ ٱلۡقُرۡءَانُ جُمۡلَةٗ وَٰحِدَةٗۚ كَذَٰلِكَ لِنُثَبِّتَ بِهِۦ فُؤَادَكَۖ وَرَتَّلۡنَٰهُ تَرۡتِيلٗا ﴾

"And those who disbelieve say: Why has not the Qur'ān been revealed to him all at once? Thus, that We may strengthen your heart by it and We have arranged it well in arranging."[1]

In another place, God explains the gradual descent of his final revealed word, in this manner:

1. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Furqān (25:32).

﴿ وَقُرْءَانًا فَرَقْنَٰهُ لِتَقْرَأَهُۥ عَلَى ٱلنَّاسِ عَلَىٰ مُكْثٍ وَنَزَّلْنَٰهُ تَنزِيلًا ﴾

"And it is a Qur'ān which We have revealed in portions so that you may read it to the people by slow degrees, and We have revealed it, revealing in portions."[1]

The divine wisdom behind the gradual revelation of the Qur'ān was to comfort the Holy Prophet (ṣ) and the Muslims, and to reassure them that God's mercy and favor is continuously focused upon them.

﴿ وَٱصْبِرْ لِحُكْمِ رَبِّكَ فَإِنَّكَ بِأَعْيُنِنَا ۖ وَسَبِّحْ بِحَمْدِ رَبِّكَ حِينَ تَقُومُ ﴾

"And wait patiently for the judgment of your Lord, for surely you are before Our eyes, and sing the praise of your Lord when you rise;"[2]

Verses, such as the one quoted above, which aim at reinforcing the holy Prophet's (ṣ) serenity and composure, can be found abundantly in the Qur'ān.

The Beginning of Qur'ānic Descent

The descent of the Holy Qur'ān started in the month of Ramaḍān and at the night of *Qadr* (Glory).

﴿ شَهْرُ رَمَضَانَ ٱلَّذِىٓ أُنزِلَ فِيهِ ٱلْقُرْءَانُ هُدًى لِّلنَّاسِ وَبَيِّنَٰتٍ مِّنَ ٱلْهُدَىٰ وَٱلْفُرْقَانِ ۚ فَمَن شَهِدَ مِنكُمُ ٱلشَّهْرَ فَلْيَصُمْهُ ۖ وَمَن كَانَ مَرِيضًا أَوْ عَلَىٰ سَفَرٍ فَعِدَّةٌ مِّنْ أَيَّامٍ أُخَرَ ۗ يُرِيدُ ٱللَّهُ بِكُمُ ٱلْيُسْرَ وَلَا يُرِيدُ بِكُمُ ٱلْعُسْرَ وَلِتُكْمِلُوا۟ ٱلْعِدَّةَ وَلِتُكَبِّرُوا۟ ٱللَّهَ عَلَىٰ مَا هَدَىٰكُمْ وَلَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ ﴾

"The month of Ramaḍān is that in which the Qur'ān was revealed, a guidance to men and clear proofs of the guidance and the distinction; therefore whoever of you is present in the month, he shall fast therein, and whoever is sick or upon a journey, then (he shall fast) a (like) number of other days; Allah desires ease for you, and He does not desire for you difficulty, and (He desires) that you should complete the number and that you should exalt the greatness of Allah for His having guided you and that you may give thanks."[3]

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1. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Isrā' (17:106).
2. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Ṭūr (52:48).
3. The Holy Qur'ān, al-Baqarah (2:185).

﴿ إِنَّآ أَنزَلۡنَٰهُ فِي لَيۡلَةٖ مُّبَٰرَكَةٍۚ إِنَّا كُنَّا مُنذِرِينَ ۝٣ فِيهَا يُفۡرَقُ كُلُّ أَمۡرٍ حَكِيمٍ ۝٤ ﴾

"Surely We revealed it on a blessed night surely We are ever warning-- Therein every wise affair is made distinct,"[1]

﴿ إِنَّآ أَنزَلۡنَٰهُ فِي لَيۡلَةِ ٱلۡقَدۡرِ ﴾

"Surely We revealed it on the grand night."[2]

The *Night of Glory*, according to the Shīʿah Imāmiyyah School of Islamic thought, corresponds either with the twenty-first or the twenty-third night of Ramaḍān. Shaykh al-Kulaynī narrates that Ḥasan ibn Mihrān asked Imam al-Ṣādiq (ʿa), "Which night is the Night of Glory?" to which the Imam replied,

> "Search for it in one of these two nights; the twenty-first and the twenty-third (of Ramaḍān)."

Zurārah narrates Imam al-Ṣādiq's words as such:

> "The nineteenth night is the Night of Divine Decree, the twenty-first night is the Night of Specification and Appointment, and the twenty-third night is the Night of Finalization and Ratification."[3]

Similarly, with reference to this issue, Shaykh al-Ṣadūq writes, "Our senior scholars unanimously agree that the twenty-third night of Ramaḍān is the Night of Glory."[4]

The Three Year Gap in the Descent of the Holy Qur'ān

Prophetic revelation (technically called *al-biʿthah* or *al-mabʿath)* began on the twenty-seventh of Rajab, in the thirteenth year preceding the Prophet's migration to al-Madīnah (609 CE)[5]. Nevertheless, the descent of the Qur'ān,

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1. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Dukhān (44:3-4).
2. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Qadr (97:1).
3. Al-Ḥurr al-`Āmilī, ***Wasā'il al-Shī'ah***, vol. 7, the chapter concerning the laws of Ramaḍān, Chap. 32, *Ḥadīth* 1; Shaykh al-Ṭūsī, ***Tahdhīb al-Aḥkām***, vol. 4, pg. 330, reference no. 1032.
4. Shaykh al-Ṣadūq, ***al-Khiṣāl***, vol. 2, pg. 102; ***al-Tamhīd***, vol. 1, pg. 108-109.
5. An abundant number of traditions indicate that the start of prophetic revelation took place on the twenty-seventh of Rajab. Therefore, this month is sanctified as the month within which the doors of divine mercy were flung open upon humanity. Due to this very reason, the performance of numerous ritual prayers and acts of worship has been recommended in this month (Ibn al-Shaykh, ***al-Amālī***, pg. 28; Shaykh al-Kulaynī, ***Al-Kāfī***, vol. 4, pg. 149; ʿAllāmah al-Majlisī, ***Biḥār al-Anwār***, vol. 18, pg. 189; al-Ḥurr al-ʿAmilī, ***Wasā'il al-Shī'ah***, vol. 7, Chapter: *al-ṣawm al-mandūb*,

in terms of it being a sacred book, started three years after this initial communication, between God and His Messenger (ṣ) had taken place. These three years are called *al-fatrah*.[1] The Prophet (ṣ) carried out his mission secretly during this time, until the following verse was revealed unto him, directing him to publically declare his prophethood.[2]

﴿ فَٱصۡدَعۡ بِمَا تُؤۡمَرُ وَأَعۡرِضۡ عَنِ ٱلۡمُشۡرِكِينَ ﴾

"Therefore declare openly what you are bidden and turn aside from the polytheists."[3]

Abū-ʿAbdullāh al-Zanjānī says, "After the verse '*Read in the name of your Lord...*' (The first verse of Sūrah al-ʿAlaq and the first divine revelation experienced by the Prophet Muḥammad was revealed), three years of silence, call *fatrah*, transpired. The descent of the Holy Qur'ān started only after these three years had come to an end. Thereafter, the continual descent of the Holy Qur'ān began, the gradual nature of which was criticized by the polytheists."[4]

Chap. 10, *Ḥadīth.* 1-7; Ibn Shahr'āshūb, ***al-Manāqib***, vol. 1, pg. 150; al-Ḥalabī, ***al-Sīrah al-Ḥalabiyyah***, vol. 1, pg. 238; ***Muntakhab Kanz al-ʿUmmāl*** in the marginal notes of ***Musnad Aḥmad***, vol. 3, pg. 362). However, Abū-Jaʿfar al-Ṭabarī al-Āmulī (224-310 A.H.) has quoted a tradition that seeks to establish this date as the 17th of Ramaḍān. He bases his argument on verse 41 of Sūrah al-Anfāl. This verse is about the Battle of Badr which took place during this time. Apparently, Abū-ʿAbdullāh al-Zanjānī has also supported this view (***Tārīkh al-Qur'ān***, pg. 7). Nonetheless, the author of ***al-Tamhīd*** believes that this verse simply refers to the fact that on this day (i.e. the 17th of Ramaḍān) a few verses regarding matters related to war, especially the spoils of wars, were revealed unto the Holy Prophet (ṣ), while it bears no indication towards the issue of the start of prophetic revelation (***al-Tamhīd***, vol. 1, pg. 106).

1. The Arabic word *fatrah* (فترة), literally meaning slowing down and decreasing, is a term used to symbolically signify the abeyance that befell the process of divine revelation.

2. Ibn Hishām, ***al-Sīrah al-Nabawiyyah***, vol. 1, pg. 280; Qummī al-, Abul-Ḥasan ʿAlī ibn Ibrāhīm, ***Tafsīr al-Qummī***: exegesis of verse 94 of Sūrah al-Ḥijr. Ibn Shahr'āshūb, ***al-Manāqib***, vol. 1, pg. 40.

3. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Ḥijr (15:94).

4. ***Tārīkh al-Qur'ān***, pg. 9.

The Period of Descent

It took twenty years for the descent of the Holy Qur'ān to reach its completion.[1] This process started three years after the first divine communication between God and His Holy Apostle (ṣ) had taken place, and ended in the last year of the Holy Prophet's blessed lifetime. Abū-Jaʿfar Muḥammad ibn Yaʿqūb al-Kulaynī al-Rāzī (deceased 328 A.H.) has narrated a tradition which reports: Ḥafṣ ibn Ghiyāth asked Imam al-Ṣādiq (ʿa), "Why has God declared that He sent down the Qur'ān in the month of Ramaḍān,[2] whereas we know that the Qur'ān was revealed over a period of twenty years?"[3]

Similarly, Muḥammad ibn Masʿūd al-ʿAyyāshī al-Samarqandī (deceased 320 A.H.) quoted Ibrāhīm ibn ʿUmar al-Sinānī as having asked Imam al-Ṣādiq (ʿa) the same question[4].

ʿAlī ibn Ibrāhīm al-Qummī has also narrated a similar question asked of the blessed Imam.[5]

Even Imam al-Ṣādiq (ʿa) himself, according to one tradition, declares,

> "...then onwards, it (the Holy Qur'ān) was revealed over a period of twenty years..."

Thus, we find scholars such as Ibn Bābawayh, known as Shaykh al-Ṣadūq,[6] ʿAllāmah al-Majlisī,[7] Sayyid ʿAbdullāh Shabbar[8] and others adopting this very view.[9]

Saʿīd ibn al-Musayyab (deceased 95 A.H.) was a renowned first generation disciple and was counted as one of the 'Seven Jurisprudents of al-Madīnah'.[10] He reports, "The descent of the Holy Qur'ān occurred when the

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1. Translator's Note: Other scholars believe that the first revealed verse did, in fact, signify the beginning of the Holy Qur'ān's descent and, thus, the descent of the Qur'ān actually took place over a period of twenty three years.
2. The Tradition actually quotes verse 185 of Sūrah al-Baqarah.
3. ***Uṣūl Al-Kāfī***, vol. 2, pg. 628, Ḥadīth 6.
4. ***Tafsīr al-ʿAyyāshī***, vol. 1, pg. 80, Ḥadīth 184.
5. ***Tafsīr al-Qummī***, vol. 1, pg. 66.
6. Shaykh al-Ṣadūq, ***al-Iʿtiqādāt***, pg. 101.
7. ***Biḥār al-Anwār***, vol. 18, pg. 250-253.
8. Shabbar, ʿAbdullāh, ***Tafsīr Shubbar (Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-ʿAẓīm)***, pg. 350.
9. Suyūṭī al-, Jalāl al-Dīn, ***al-Itqān fī ʿUlūm al-Qur'ān***, vol. 1, pg. 40
10. Translator's Note: The Seven Jurisprudents of al-Madīnah is a title that became famous for a group of renowned scholars who lived in al-Madīnah city during the time of Imam ʿAlī ibn al-Ḥusayn Zayn al-ʿĀbidīn (ʿa). These were namely ʿUrwah ibn al-Zubayr, Saʿīd ibn al-Musayyab, al-Qāsim ibn Muḥammad ibn Abī-Bakr, Abū-

Prophet (ṣ) was 43 years of age."[1]

This event is clearly different from the Prophet's first experience of divine contact which, according to the consensus of Muslim scholars, occurred when he was still only 40 years old. Al-Wāḥidī al-Nayshāpūrī quotes ʿĀmir ibn Shūrāḥīl al-Shiʿbī (20-190 A.H.), a famous jurist and author from amongst the first generation disciples, as having said, "The time period of the Qur'ān's descent was approximately twenty years."[2]

Al-Shiʿbī is also quoted by Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, who reports, "Prophethood began when he was 40, and after a delay of three years from the beginning of this matter, the descent of the Holy Qur'ān started. This, itself, took twenty years to reach completion."

Similarly, Abu'l-Fidā, popularly known as Ibn al-Athīr, writes in favor of this report and declares, "The transmitting chain of this narration is absolute correct."[3]

Abū-Jaʿfar al-Ṭabarī, narrating upon the authority of ʿIkrimah, quotes Ibn ʿAbbās as having said, "The descent of the Holy Qur'ān, from the beginning to the end, took twenty years."[4]

Abu'l-Fidā Ismāʿīl ibn al-Athīr al-Dimashqī (deceased 774 A.H.) narrates a tradition quoted by Muḥammad ibn Ismāʿīl al-Bukhārī, which is as such: "Ibn ʿAbbās said to ʿĀ'ishah, 'The descent of the Holy Qur'ān took place over 10 Makkan and 10 Madīnite years.'"

Furthermore, the same author goes on to quote Abū-ʿUbayd al-Qāsim ibn Sallām that the Holy Qur'ān's descent spanned a period of twenty years. Ibn al-Athīr, having listed all these narrations, goes on to declare, "This is indeed a correct and accurate report."[5]

Having learnt about the abovementioned issues, one's mind in automatically directed towards some key questions. We shall list these questions here before actually dwelling upon their respective answers.

1. How is it possible that the Qur'ān's descent started in Ramaḍān, whereas we know that the Prophet's first experience of divine revelation took place

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Bakr ibn ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn al-Ḥārith ibn Hishām, Sulaymān ibn Yasār, ʿUbaydullāh ibn ʿUtbah ibn Masʿūd and Khārijah ibn al-Zaydī.

1. Al-Ḥākim al-Nayshābūrī, ***Al-Mustadrak ʿalā al-Ṣaḥīḥayn***, vol. 2, pg. 610.
2. Al-Wāḥidī al-Nayshābūrī, ʿAlī ibn Muḥammad, ***Asbāb al-Nuzūl***, pg. 3.
3. Ibn al-Athīr, ***al-Bidāyah wa'l-Nihāyah fi'l-Tārīkh***, vol. 3, pg. 4; al-Suyūṭī, ***al-Itqān***, vol. 1, pg. 45; Ibn Saʿd, ***al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā***, vol. 1, pg. 127.
4. ***Jāmiʿ Al-BayānTafsīr al-Ṭabarī***, vol. 2, pg. 85.
5. Ibn al-Athīr, ***Faḍā'il al-Qur'ān*** (printed as an appendix to ***Tafsīr Ibn al-Athīr***), pg.2.

on the twenty-seventh of Rajab when God revealed unto him a few verses of Sūrah al-ʿAlaq?

2. Why does God declare that He revealed the whole book unto His Messenger (ṣ) at the Night of Glory, even though we know that the Qur'ān's descent took twenty years to reach its completion and this process was itself sporadic and gradual in nature?

3. Which were the first revealed verses of the Holy Qur'ān? If the first five verses of Sūrah al-ʿAlaq were the first revealed words of God, then why is it that Sūrah al-Fātiḥah (or al-Ḥamd) is known as *fātiḥat al-kitāb* (the Exordium of the Book)?

The answer to the first and third question is rather self-apparent. As we mentioned earlier, the descent of the Holy Qur'ān, as a divine scripture, began three years after the first contact between God and His Messenger (ṣ) had already taken place. During these initial three years, the Prophet (ṣ) engaged in covert propagation of his prophetic mission, and he did not have any book or message at his disposal. This situation continued until God sent down a verse commanding the Holy Prophet (ṣ) to publically declare his apostolic status and mission. With this public declaration of the Messenger's divinely ordained duty, the Prophet's apostolic task, and the descent of the Qur'ān with it, formally began.[1] However, the title *fātiḥat al-kitāb* associated with Sūrah al-Ḥamd (no. 1), assuming that this association originates from the time of the Prophet (ṣ) himself,[2] might be because the said Sūrah was the first complete chapter revealed onto the Holy Messenger (ṣ). We find in some of the traditions that the Archangel Gabriel, in the very beginning of Muḥammad's prophethood, had already delivered to him the Islamic commandments regarding prayer and ritual ablution (*wuḍū'*). Since the establishment of daily prayer is impossible without the recitation of Sūrah al-Ḥamd, it can be concluded that this chapter had already been revealed, in its entirety, upon the Holy Prophet (ṣ) during the nascent stages of his apostolic journey.[3]

As for the second question, there exists much debate with regard to this matter. This debate has led to a large body of differing opinions. Here, we shall narrate some of the famous views that scholars have held with reference to this issue:

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1. ***Al-Tamhīd***, vol. 1, pg. 108 onwards.
2. The association of this title to Sūrah al-Fātiḥah, or al-Ḥamd, may have happened after the demise of the Holy Prophet (ṣ). This association may have originated from the time when the Qur'ān was compiled and its chapters were put into the sequence that we see today.
3. ***Al-Tamhīd***, vol. 1, pg. 110.

Opinion One: "The descent of the Holy Qur'ān started at the Night of Glory, as the apparent meaning of verse 185 of Sūrah al-Baqarah dictates. Most research scholars have also adhered to this opinion. In the view of contemporary experts, the Qur'ān's usage of the phrase *descent of the Qur'ān* does not denote the descent of the whole book in its entirety, in one place and at one time, but rather the beginning of a lengthy and gradual process. While interpreting the given verse, they translate it as, "The beginning of the Qur'ān's descent took place at the Night of Glory."[1] However, from amongst the scholars, there are those who adhere firmly to the apparent meaning of the verse and thus reject the above-mentioned opinion.[2]

In support of the first view, one can mention that traditions related to the descent of the Holy Qur'ān are not such, that accepting them on face value be deemed obligatory i.e. these traditions are in themselves open to interpretation, and this interpretation must be in accordance to the ideological superstructure of Islam. This, in turn, is due to the fact that such traditions fall within the parameters of ideology and not practical law. Acceptance without scrutiny is applicable to the latter only, because once the absolute veracity of the Holy Book and the Prophet (ṣ) are intellectually proven, it is but logical to accept all the commandments dictated by them as absolute truth. However, in all ideological matters, because ideology is the foundation of belief and this foundation must rest on irrefutable intellectual proof, there is ample room for scrutiny, interpretation and even rejection. This is especially true when such an ideological matter apparently

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1. Al-Zamakhsharī writes down, "The phrase *'The Qur'ān descended in it…'* means that *'The Qur'ān began its descent in it…"* (***Tafsīr al-Kashshāf***, vol. 1, pg. 227).
As for al-Bayḍāwī, he states, "It means *'the start of the Qur'ān's descent'…*" (***Anwār al-Tanzīl***, vol. 1, pg. 217).
Shaykh Muḥammad ʿAbduh says, "The phrase *'Qur'ān's descent in this night'* is indicative of the beginning of its descent" (***Tafsīr al-Manār***, vol. 2, pg. 158).
Al-Marāghī says, "It means that the process of descent began on these days of the month of Ramaḍān." (***Tafsīr al-Marāghī***, vol. 2, pg. 73).
Ibn Shahr'āshūb says, "The word *Qur'ān*, used herein, does not indicate the whole Qur'ān, rather it indicates a select portion of the Holy Book which was revealed within that particular night." (***Mutashābihāt al-Qur'ān***, vol. 1, pg. 63).
In another place, he says, "The verse indicates that the descent of the Qur'ān started during the month of Ramaḍān." (***Al-Manāqib***, vol. 1, pg. 150).
Shaykh al-Mufīd says the same in his book ***Sharḥ al-ʿAqā'id*** (***Taṣḥīḥ al-ʿAqā'id***, pg. 58).
Sayyid Murtaḍā holds the same opinion. (***Ajwibat al-Masā'il al-Ṭarāblusiyyah***, pg. 403-405).

2. ***Tafsīr al-Ṣāfī,*** the ninth preface; ***Kanz al-Daqā'iq***, vol. 1, pg. 430; ***Tafsīr al-ʿAyyāshī***, vol. 1, pg. 80; ***Tafsīr al-Qummī***, vol. 1, pg. 66.

contradicts the evident text of the Holy Book.

Based on this principle (unless we give ourselves up to a variety of allegorical interpretations), it seems rather improbable for the descent of the Holy Qur'ān to have taken place, in its entirety, in just one night. One apparent proof of this matter is that the Holy Qur'ān refers frequently to future events, events that took place after the Night of Glory. Examples of this are as follows:

﴿ وَلَقَدْ نَصَرَكُمُ ٱللَّهُ بِبَدْرٍ وَأَنتُمْ أَذِلَّةٌ ۖ فَٱتَّقُوا۟ ٱللَّهَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ ﴾

"And Allah did certainly assist you at Badr when you were weak; be careful of (your duty to) Allah then, that you may give thanks."[1]

﴿ لَقَدْ نَصَرَكُمُ ٱللَّهُ فِى مَوَاطِنَ كَثِيرَةٍ ۙ وَيَوْمَ حُنَيْنٍ ۙ إِذْ أَعْجَبَتْكُمْ كَثْرَتُكُمْ فَلَمْ تُغْنِ عَنكُمْ شَيْـًٔا وَضَاقَتْ عَلَيْكُمُ ٱلْأَرْضُ بِمَا رَحُبَتْ ثُمَّ وَلَّيْتُم مُّدْبِرِينَ ﴿٢٥﴾ ثُمَّ أَنزَلَ ٱللَّهُ سَكِينَتَهُۥ عَلَىٰ رَسُولِهِۦ وَعَلَى ٱلْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَأَنزَلَ جُنُودًا لَّمْ تَرَوْهَا وَعَذَّبَ ٱلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا۟ ۚ وَذَٰلِكَ جَزَآءُ ٱلْكَٰفِرِينَ ﴿٢٦﴾ ﴾

"Certainly Allah helped you in many battlefields and on the day of Hunain, when your great numbers made you vain, but they availed you nothing and the earth became strait to you notwithstanding its spaciousness, then you turned back retreating. Then Allah sent down His tranquility upon His Apostle and upon the believers, and sent down hosts which you did not see, and chastised those who disbelieved, and that is the reward of the unbelievers."[2]

﴿ إِلَّا تَنصُرُوهُ فَقَدْ نَصَرَهُ ٱللَّهُ إِذْ أَخْرَجَهُ ٱلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا۟ ثَانِىَ ٱثْنَيْنِ إِذْ هُمَا فِى ٱلْغَارِ إِذْ يَقُولُ لِصَٰحِبِهِۦ لَا تَحْزَنْ إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ مَعَنَا ۖ فَأَنزَلَ ٱللَّهُ سَكِينَتَهُۥ عَلَيْهِ وَأَيَّدَهُۥ بِجُنُودٍ لَّمْ تَرَوْهَا وَجَعَلَ كَلِمَةَ ٱلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا۟ ٱلسُّفْلَىٰ ۗ وَكَلِمَةُ ٱللَّهِ هِىَ ٱلْعُلْيَا ۗ وَٱللَّهُ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ ﴾

"If you will not aid him, Allah certainly aided him when those who disbelieved expelled him, he being the second of the two, when they were both in the cave, when he said to his companion: Grieve not, surely Allah is with us. So Allah sent down His tranquility upon him and strengthened him with hosts which you did not see, and

1. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah Āl-ʿImrān (3:123).
2. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Tawbah (9:25-26).

made lowest the word of those who disbelieved; and the word of Allah, that is the highest; and Allah is Mighty, Wise."[1]

﴿عَفَا ٱللَّهُ عَنكَ لِمَ أَذِنتَ لَهُمۡ حَتَّىٰ يَتَبَيَّنَ لَكَ ٱلَّذِينَ صَدَقُواْ وَتَعۡلَمَ ٱلۡكَٰذِبِينَ﴾

"Allah pardon you! Why did you give them leave until those who spoke the truth had become manifest to you and you had known the liars?"[2]

﴿ فَرِحَ ٱلۡمُخَلَّفُونَ بِمَقۡعَدِهِمۡ خِلَٰفَ رَسُولِ ٱللَّهِ وَكَرِهُوٓاْ أَن يُجَٰهِدُواْ بِأَمۡوَٰلِهِمۡ وَأَنفُسِهِمۡ فِي سَبِيلِ ٱللَّهِ وَقَالُواْ لَا تَنفِرُواْ فِي ٱلۡحَرِّۗ قُلۡ نَارُ جَهَنَّمَ أَشَدُّ حَرّٗاۚ لَّوۡ كَانُواْ يَفۡقَهُونَ ﴾

"Those who were left behind were glad on account of their sitting behind Allah's Apostle and they were averse from striving in Allah's way with their property and their persons, and said: Do not go forth in the heat. Say: The fire of hell is much severe in heat. Would that they understood (it)?"[3]

﴿ وَجَآءَ ٱلۡمُعَذِّرُونَ مِنَ ٱلۡأَعۡرَابِ لِيُؤۡذَنَ لَهُمۡ وَقَعَدَ ٱلَّذِينَ كَذَبُواْ ٱللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُۥۚ سَيُصِيبُ ٱلَّذِينَ كَفَرُواْ مِنۡهُمۡ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٞ ﴾

"And the defaulters from among the dwellers of the desert came that permission may be given to them and they sat (at home) who lied to Allah and His Apostle; a painful chastisement shall afflict those of them who disbelieved."[4]

﴿ وَٱلَّذِينَ ٱتَّخَذُواْ مَسۡجِدٗا ضِرَارٗا وَكُفۡرٗا وَتَفۡرِيقَۢا بَيۡنَ ٱلۡمُؤۡمِنِينَ وَإِرۡصَادٗا لِّمَنۡ حَارَبَ ٱللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُۥ مِن قَبۡلُۚ وَلَيَحۡلِفُنَّ إِنۡ أَرَدۡنَآ إِلَّا ٱلۡحُسۡنَىٰۖ وَٱللَّهُ يَشۡهَدُ إِنَّهُمۡ لَكَٰذِبُونَ ﴾

"And those who built a masjid to cause harm and for unbelief and to cause disunion among the believers and an ambush to him who made war against Allah and His Apostle before; and they will certainly swear: We did not desire aught but good; and Allah bears witness that they are most surely liars."[5]

1. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Tawbah (9:40).
2. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Tawbah (9:43).
3. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Tawbah (9:81).
4. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Tawbah (9:90).
5. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Tawbah (9:107).

﴿ مِّنَ ٱلۡمُؤۡمِنِينَ رِجَالٞ صَدَقُواْ مَا عَٰهَدُواْ ٱللَّهَ عَلَيۡهِۖ فَمِنۡهُم مَّن قَضَىٰ نَحۡبَهُۥ وَمِنۡهُم مَّن يَنتَظِرُۖ وَمَا بَدَّلُواْ تَبۡدِيلٗا ﴾

"Of the believers are men who are true to the covenant which they made with Allah: so of them is he who accomplished his vow, and of them is he who yet waits, and they have not changed in the least"[1]

﴿ قَدۡ سَمِعَ ٱللَّهُ قَوۡلَ ٱلَّتِي تُجَٰدِلُكَ فِي زَوۡجِهَا وَتَشۡتَكِيٓ إِلَى ٱللَّهِ وَٱللَّهُ يَسۡمَعُ تَحَاوُرَكُمَآۚ إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ سَمِيعُۢ بَصِيرٌ ﴾

"Allah indeed knows the plea of her who pleads with you about her husband and complains to Allah, and Allah knows the contentions of both of you; surely Allah is Hearing, Seeing."[2]

Verses of this kind, which report events in the past tense, are abundant in the Holy Book, and if these verses had been revealed at the Night of Glory (i.e. the first and original Night of Glory) the Qur'ān would have reported them in the future tense, since that had not yet taken place.

The above argument aside, we also find in the Holy Qur'ān verses that are classified as *nāsikh*[3] and *mansūkh*,[4] general and particular, absolute and restricted, vague and definitive. Verses, in each one of these categories, are such that they demand the existence of a chronological difference between their respective descents e.g. it makes no sense if a *nāsikh* verse is revealed at the same time as a *mansūkh* one. Even verse 185 of Sūrah al-Baqarah, which forms the impetus behind this discussion, is set in the past tense and seeks to report an event that has already taken place. Therefore, it is not possible that this verse, and others like it, be deemed part of the Qur'ān while they simultaneously declare that the whole Qur'ān has already been revealed before their own revelation. Consequently, when these verses speak of the "Descent of the Holy Qur'ān" they are, in fact, merely speaking of the start of this descent. Even if we were to entertain the possibility of simultaneous revelation for all these verses at the Night of Glory, it would still be necessary for their contents to be set in the present tense rather than in the past tense.[5]

1. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Aḥzāb (33:23).
2. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Mujādilah (58:1).
3. The verses that are classified as *nāsikh*, meaning *canceller*, are the verses that abrogate and nullify other verses. The process of abrogation is called *naskh.*
4. A *mansūkh* verse, literally *cancelled*, is a verse abrogated by a verse revealed after it.
5. Translator's Note: Other scholars have answered the questions raised by the

Shaykh al-Mufīd, when commenting on Shaykh al-Ṣadūq's view about the Holy Qur'ān having dual descents (*dafʿī*, instantaneous and all at once, and *tadrījī*, gradual and continual), says the following:

"The source of Shaykh Abū-Jaʿfar al-Ṣadūq's opinion is a single narrated tradition. Such traditions, by definition, neither necessitate validating knowledge, nor obligate obedience in action. Apart from this, we know that the Qur'ān's descent took place in accordance with, and in response to, a multitude of different circumstances collectively known as *asbāb al-nuzūl* (or Reasons of Descent). This fact is, in itself, proof that the apparent meaning of this tradition cannot be deemed acceptable. We find the Qur'ān speaking of certain events, the narration of which makes no sense unless the actual events had already come to pass. The only rational conclusion is that the descent of these verses took place along with, or after, the narrated events had already taken place. For example we see in the Qur'ān:

﴿ وَقَالُوا۟ قُلُوبُنَا غُلْفٌۢ ۚ بَل لَّعَنَهُمُ ٱللَّهُ بِكُفْرِهِمْ فَقَلِيلًا مَّا يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴾

"And they say: Our hearts are covered. Nay, Allah has cursed them on account of their unbelief; so little it is that they believe."[1]

﴿ وَقَالُوا۟ لَوْ شَآءَ ٱلرَّحْمَٰنُ مَا عَبَدْنَٰهُم ۗ مَّا لَهُم بِذَٰلِكَ مِنْ عِلْمٍ ۖ إِنْ هُمْ إِلَّا يَخْرُصُونَ ﴾

"And they say: If the Beneficent Allah had pleased, we should never have worshipped them. They have no knowledge of this; they only lie."[2]

Verses like these, which speak of events in the past tense, could not have been revealed unless the actual event had already materialized. Such verses are abundant in the Holy Qur'ān."[3]

Sayyid Murtaḍā ʿAlam al-Hūdā remarks:

"If Shaykh Abū-Jaʿfar al-Ṣadūq bases his opinion, regarding the instantaneous descent of the entire Qur'ān, upon narrated traditions, these traditions are of a kind that they neither necessitate knowledge nor obedience. Moreover, in opposition to these traditions, we find a huge body

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respected author and have argued in defense of what the author believes to be an incorrect opinion. The reader, if interested, may refer to other more detailed books, like ʿAllāmah al-Ṭabāṭabā'ī's famous book of Qur'ānic exegesis, called ***al-Mīzān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān***.

1. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Baqarah (2:88).
2. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Zukhruf (43:20).
3. Shaykh al-Mufīd, Muḥammad ibn al-Nuʿmān, ***Taṣḥīḥ al-ʿAqā'id***, pg. 57-58.

of traditions actually proving the contrary to be true. We find traditions speaking of the descent of verses in Makkah and in al-Madīnah, and we even come across traditions that speak of the Prophet (ṣ) anxiously awaiting the descent of divine revelation. Verses of this sort are plentiful. Furthermore, the Qur'ān itself declares that its descent was scattered in nature:

﴿ وَقَالَ ٱلَّذِينَ كَفَرُواْ لَوۡلَا نُزِّلَ عَلَيۡهِ ٱلۡقُرۡءَانُ جُمۡلَةٗ وَٰحِدَةٗۚ كَذَٰلِكَ لِنُثَبِّتَ بِهِۦ فُؤَادَكَۖ وَرَتَّلۡنَٰهُ تَرۡتِيلٗا ﴾

"And those who disbelieve say: Why has not the Qur'ān been revealed to him all at once? Thus, that We may strengthen your heart by it and We have arranged it well in arranging."[1]

Herein, the phrase "*that We may strengthen,"* affirms that the Qur'ān's descent was sporadic and scattered, and goes on to explain why this was so."[2]

Opinion Two: Another group holds the opinion that the Qur'ān's descent constituted an annual occurrence which took place during the Night of Glory. Every year, during this particular night, all verses of the Holy Qur'ān necessary for that particular year were sent down, in their entirety, upon the Holy Prophet (ṣ). Subsequently, these very same verses would also be revealed from time to time, throughout the year, in accordance with newly occurring events and circumstances. Based on this assumption, the *Ramaḍān* and the *Night of Glory,* spoken of in the Qur'ān, are not indicative of a particular month or night. Rather, these words represent all instances of the two which occur, invariably, year after year. This opinion is traced back to ʿAbd al-Mālik ibn ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz ibn Jurayḥ (deceased 150 A.H.), and has been able to capture some acceptability amongst a certain group of scholars.[3]

However, as we have discussed previously, this view is contradictory to the apparent text of the Holy Qur'ān. As such, all criticism pertaining to *opinion five*, the discussion regarding which shall follow shortly, is also applicable herein.

Opinion Three: Some are of the view that the phrase *unzila fihi'l-qur'ānu* (It - the Qur'ān - was revealed in the month of Ramaḍān) actually means that

1. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Furqān (25:32).
2. ***Rasā'il al-Murtaḍā***; Collection no. 1, Response to the issues of ***al-Ṭarābulsiyyāt*** no. 3, pg. 403-405.
3. Al-Fakhr al-Rāzī, ***al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr***, vol. 5, pg. 85; al-Suyūṭī, ***Al-Durr al-Manthūr***, vol. 1, pg. 189; Shaykh al-Ṭabarsī, ***Majmaʿ Al-Bayān***, vol. 2, pg. 276; ***al-Itqān***, vol. 1, pg. 40.

the Qur'ān was sent down in honor of Ramaḍān, rather than *in it*. According to Sufyān ibn ʿUyaynah (deceased 198 A.H.), this verse seeks to say that 'The Qur'ān was revealed in honor of Ramaḍān.'

Al-Ḍaḥḥāk ibn Muzāḥim (deceased 106 A.H.) has interpreted this verse as such: 'The commandment to fast in the month of Ramaḍān was sent down in the Qur'ān.' Some other scholars have also adhered to this view.[1] Even though this reading may seem appropriate when dealing with verse 185 of Sūrah al-Baqarah, it fails to suffice when applied to similar instances present in Sūrah al-Dukhān and Sūrah al-Qadr.

Opinion Four: According to the fourth view, most of the Qur'ān's verses were revealed in the month of Ramaḍān, and the verse in question is merely a statement of this fact. Some scholars, like Sayyid Quṭb, have accepted this opinion as a possibility;[2] however, no solid evidence exists in support of this view. Even if this belief could somehow be corroborated, it would still fall short of explaining why the Holy Qur'ān uses similar words in relation to the Night of Glory.

Based on the analysis presented above, we can easily conclude that opinions two, three and four are by no means acceptable.

Opinion Five: Some believe that the Holy Qur'ān had two descents, *dafʿī* (instantaneous) and *tadrījī* (gradual). The first occurred at the Night of Glory, when the whole Qur'ān was revealed by God upon the heart of the Holy Prophet (ṣ), in just one act of revelation. The second took place gradually and continually throughout the Prophet's lifetime. This opinion is probably the most famous of the views held by the Ahl al-Ḥadīth, the source of which are traditions that explain the process of descent in the manner stated above. Some scholars have accepted these traditions on face value, while others have sought to interpret them in order to render them more compatible with the grander structure of Qur'ānic teachings. Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī says, "The most correct from amongst the opinions related to the descent of the Holy Qur'ān is indeed this, and we find an abundant number of traditions to support this view."

He goes on to quote Ibn ʿAbbās as such: "The Qur'ān was sent down at the Night of Glory, in its entirety, upon the lower most of the heavens. There, it came to rest in the *bayt al-ʿizzah* (House of Exalted Power). Subsequently, it descended upon the Holy Prophet (ṣ), gradually, over a period of twenty

1. Shaykh al-Ṭabarsī, ***Majmaʿ Al-Bayān***, vol. 1, pg. 276; al-Zamakhsharī, ***al-Kashshāf***, vol. 1, pg. 227; al-Suy***ūṭī, Al-Durr al-Manthūr***, vol. 1, pg. 190; al-Fakhr al-Rāzī, ***al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr***, vol. 5, pg. 80.
2. Sayyid Quṭb, ***fī Ẓilāl al-Qur'ān***, vol. 2, pg. 79.

years"[1].

According to traditions narrated by the Ahl al-Sunnah, the Qur'ān was sent down, in its entirety, to rest upon the lower most of the heavens, in a place called *bayt al-ʿizzah*. However, in traditions narrated by Shīʿah sources, the Qur'ān came to rest in a place called *al-bayt al-maʿmūr* (The Inhabited House) situated on the fourth from amongst the seven heavens. Al-Ṣadūq believes this concept to be a necessary article of faith and declares, "God sent down the Qur'ān in the month of Ramaḍān and at the Night of Glory, in its entirety, upon the 'Inhabited House' situated on the fourth heaven. Subsequently, it descended from that house onto the Holy Prophet (ṣ) over a period of twenty years. Indeed God has given His Messenger (ṣ) complete knowledge."[2]

Even though literalists have accepted such traditions on face value, those interested in a deeper level of understanding have sought to interpret these narrations in order to reconcile their contents with the foundational structure of Islamic doctrine. They have done so because of several problematic issues which come about if one accepts the apparent meaning of these given narrations.

Some of these problematic issues are as such: What is the reason behind the descent of the Holy Qur'ān onto the fourth (or the lower most) heaven, and what motive lies behind its temporary storage within the Inhabited House (or the House of Exalted Power)?

What wisdom exists in this apparently inconsequential change of locations?

Apart from this, what result or benefit came about from this movement that led God to speak of it in such a grand manner?

The final product of descent is the Qur'ān that we see today (words, meanings and teachings that are the source of human salvation); therefore, what difference did the intermediate descent of this divine message onto the lower most (or the fourth) heaven create in terms of its value and benefit to humanity?

Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī has answered these questions as such, "It is possible that God's intention was to make the Archangel Gabriel's job easier so that, whenever needed, he could bring the relevant verses of the Qur'ān down onto the Holy Prophet (ṣ) with greater haste."[3]

This, however, is not a correct reply and is certainly not in line with al-Rāzī's scholarly aptitude and position. We already know that in the

1. ***al-Itqān***, vol. 1, pg. 39-40.
2. ***al-Iʿtiqādāt***, Chapter 31.
3. Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, ***al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr***, vol. 5, pg. 85.

metaphysical realm there exist no distances, and that time and space are characteristics exclusive to the material plane of existence, therefore, spatial proximity could not have been the reason behind this divine act.

In explaining the concept of these two descents, scholars have largely relied on allegorical interpretations. Herein, we shall present some of the most important of these explanations.

1. Some scholars, like Shaykh al-Ṣadūq, believe that the 'instantaneous' descent of the Holy Qur'ān, that took place at the Night of Glory, was a descent in which the Holy Prophet (ṣ) was given an overall knowledge of the divine book. Al-Ṣadūq says, "Surely, God bestowed upon His Messenger (ṣ) the 'knowledge', holistically" i.e. an overall knowledge of the Qur'ān but not the exact words of the divine scripture.

2. Al-Fayḍ al-Kāshānī believes that the 'Inhabited House' is, in fact, the sacred heart of the Holy Prophet (ṣ), named thus because it forms the hallowed sanctum wherein God, metaphorically, resides. Similarly, the fourth heaven represents the highest existential level of material beings. This is a level occupied by those who have risen completely above the three prior stages of materiality, namely, the stages of inanimate existence, vegetative existence, and bestial existence. This fourth stage is, in fact, a level that represents true human existence, purified of the carnal characteristics that define the three levels before it. Therefore, the Holy Qur'ān was first revealed onto the heart of the Blessed Prophet (ṣ) and then, over a period of twenty years, descended from his 'heart' onto his 'tongue' via the Archangel Gabriel.[1]

From our point of view, this explanation falls short of solving the problem faced by us earlier, since it fails to clarify the reason behind these dual descents.

3. Abū-ʿAbdullāh al-Zanjānī says, "The soul of the Holy Qur'ān, embodied by the divine message enshrined within its text, was sent down upon the heart of the Holy Prophet (ṣ) during the Night of Glory.

﴿ نَزَلَ بِهِ ٱلرُّوحُ ٱلْأَمِينُ ﴿١٩٣﴾ عَلَىٰ قَلْبِكَ لِتَكُونَ مِنَ ٱلْمُنذِرِينَ ﴿١٩٤﴾ ﴾

"The Faithful Spirit has descended with it, Upon your heart that you may be of the warners"[2]

Subsequently, over the many years that followed, this truth gradually revealed itself by way of the Holy Prophet's (ṣ) tongue.

1. Al-Fayḍ al-Kāshānī, ***Tafsīr al-Ṣāfī***, vol. 1, pg. 42.
2. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Shuʿarā' (26:193-194).

﴿ وَقُرْءَانًا فَرَقْنَٰهُ لِتَقْرَأَهُۥ عَلَى ٱلنَّاسِ عَلَىٰ مُكْثٍ وَنَزَّلْنَٰهُ تَنزِيلًا ﴾

"And it is a Qur'ān which We have revealed in portions so that you may read it to the people by slow degrees, and We have revealed it, revealing in portions."[1]

4. ʿAllāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī presents the same explanation, but in a much more eloquent manner. He says that the Holy Qur'ān has for itself an existence and reality far more profound than its material and apparent self. This higher reality is hidden behind the superficiality of its apparent existence, and is, therefore, preserved and protected beyond the reach of ordinary perception. The Qur'ān, in its true inner self, is devoid of any division or detail.[2] This inner reality contains no parts or sections, nor is it divisible into verses and chapters. In fact, it forms an absolute unity, in the perfect sense of the word, unshakable and firm, beyond the reach of mortal hands.

﴿ الٓر ۚ كِتَٰبٌ أُحْكِمَتْ ءَايَٰتُهُۥ ثُمَّ فُصِّلَتْ مِن لَّدُنْ حَكِيمٍ خَبِيرٍ ﴾

"Alif Lam Ra (This is) a Book, whose verses are made decisive, then are they made plain, from the Wise, All-aware:"[3]

﴿ وَإِنَّهُۥ فِىٓ أُمِّ ٱلْكِتَٰبِ لَدَيْنَا لَعَلِىٌّ حَكِيمٌ ﴾

"And surely it is in the original of the Book with Us, truly elevated, full of wisdom."[4]

﴿ إِنَّهُۥ لَقُرْءَانٌ كَرِيمٌ ۝٧٧ فِى كِتَٰبٍ مَّكْنُونٍ ۝٧٨ لَّا يَمَسُّهُۥٓ إِلَّا ٱلْمُطَهَّرُونَ ۝٧٩ ﴾

"Most surely it is an honored Qur'ān, In a book that is protected. None shall touch it save the purified ones."[5]

﴿ وَلَقَدْ جِئْنَٰهُم بِكِتَٰبٍ فَصَّلْنَٰهُ عَلَىٰ عِلْمٍ هُدًى وَرَحْمَةً لِّقَوْمٍ يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴾

"And certainly We have brought them a Book which We have made clear with knowledge, a guidance and a mercy for a people who believe."[6]

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1. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Isrā' (17:106).
2. Translator's note: The exact words used by ʿAllāmah are *tajziyah* (تجزیه), meaning the divisibility of an object into separate and differentiated parts by way of deconstruction, and *tafṣīl* (تفصیل), meaning the divisibility of an object into separate and differentiated sections by way of expansion.
3. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah Hūd (11:1).
4. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Zukhruf (43:4).
5. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Wāqiʿah (56:77-79).
6. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Aʿrāf (7:52).

Thus, the Qur'ān has two existences, an outer existence that is materialized in the shape of words and sentences, while the inner existence represents the truth and essence of the Holy Qur'ān. That which descended upon the heart of the Holy Prophet (ṣ) in the Night of Glory was the Holy Qur'ān's true inner reality. Only after this first descent had taken place, did the gradual descent of the Holy Qur'ān, in its apparent and outer sense, begin to take shape. This secondary descent took place continually over an extended period of time, and would occur in accordance with various circumstances that arose throughout the Prophet's apostolic mission.[1]

In our point of view, explanations of the sort that have been listed above can be analyzed using two distinct perspectives. On one hand, these explanations appear to be scholarly and precise, and seem completely suitable for answering the various questions raised by us earlier. Having said this, the contents of these explanations would still require corroboration from the Holy Qur'ān or the traditions of the Prophet (ṣ) and his sacred progeny. On the other hand, the Holy Qur'ān apparently speaks of just one Qur'ān, none other than the one currently available to all people. It does not seem to speak of any higher existence located somewhere beyond the reach of humanity.

When God speaks of the descent of the Holy Qur'ān in the month of Ramaḍān within the Night of Glory, He seeks to establish the greatness of these two for all humanity. This task necessitates that the Qur'ān He speaks of, be a Qur'ān that the people recognize and hold in great esteem. Apart from this, how can the descent of a supposed inner reality of the Holy Qur'ān from one location to another, both being beyond human reach even for the Prophet (ṣ) himself, be of any real consequence or utility? Furthermore, why would God attribute such great importance to this apparently inconsequential movement? Allegorical explanations, such as those presented above, are only suitable when the actual point of contention has already been resolved. Therefore, such explanations are inadmissible when we seek to ponder upon the exegesis of a particular verse of the Holy Qur'ān.

The First Verse and the First Chapter

There exist three opinions about the first revealed verse and the first revealed Sūrah:

1. Some scholars are of the opinion that the first three or five verses of Sūrah al-ʿAlaq form the first revealed verses of the Holy Qur'ān. The revelation of these verses coincides with the beginning of the Messenger's prophetic mission. They correspond with the first descent of an angel upon the Prophet (ṣ), an angel who addressed him as God's Messenger and

1. ʿAllāmah al-Ṭabāṭabā'ī, ***al-Mīzān***, vol. 2, pg. 15-16.

directed him to speak. When the Holy Prophet (ṣ) asked, "What must I speak?" the angel grasped him and declared:[1]

﴿ ٱقۡرَأۡ بِٱسۡمِ رَبِّكَ ٱلَّذِي خَلَقَ ۝١ خَلَقَ ٱلۡإِنسَٰنَ مِنۡ عَلَقٍ ۝٢ ٱقۡرَأۡ وَرَبُّكَ ٱلۡأَكۡرَمُ ۝٣ ٱلَّذِي عَلَّمَ بِٱلۡقَلَمِ ۝٤ عَلَّمَ ٱلۡإِنسَٰنَ مَا لَمۡ يَعۡلَمۡ ۝٥ ﴾

"Read in the name of your Lord Who created. He created man from a clot. Read and your Lord is Most Honorable, Who taught (to write) with the pen Taught man what he knew not."[2]

Imam al-Ṣādiq (ʿa) is narrated to have said,

> "The very first of that which descended upon the Messenger of God (ṣ) was *'In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful. Read in the name of your Lord...'*[3], and the last of that which descended upon him was *'When the help of God arrives...'."*[4-5]

2. Another group considers Sūrah al-Muddaththir to have been the first revealed chapter of the Holy Qur'ān. It has been narrated that Ummu-Salamah, the blessed wife of the Holy Prophet (ṣ), asked Jābir ibn ʿAbdullāh al-Anṣārī, "Which Qur'ānic chapter or verse was the first to have descended?"

Jābir replied, "It was: '*O' You enfolded in your mantle....*'"[6]

Having heard this, she asked, "What about *'Read in the name of your Lord...?'"*[7] To this, Jābir answered, "I shall narrate for you that which I have heard from the Holy Prophet (ṣ). He said, 'I had spent an extended period of time in the whereabouts of Mount Ḥirā'. When, at last, I came down from the mountain and into the centre of the valley, I heard a voice calling onto me. I looked everywhere but saw no one, until I gazed at the sky and there I saw him (Jibrā'īl). I was filled with panic and fled back to Khadījah's house. Having entered the residence, I asked her to cover me with mantles. Only

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1. Refer to: The exegesis of the Qur'ān attributed to Imam al-Ḥasan al-ʿAskarī ('a), pg. 157; ***Biḥār al-Anwār***, vol. 18, pg. 206, Ḥadīth. 36; ***Tafsīr al-Burhān***, vol. 2, pg. 478; ***Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim***, vol. 1, pg. 97; ***Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī***, vol. 1, pg. 3.
2. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah al-ʿAlaq (96:1-5).
3. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah al-ʿAlaq (96:1).
4. Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Naṣr (110:1).
5. ***Uṣūl Al-Kāfī***, vol. 2, pg. 628; Shaykh al-Ṣadūq, ***ʿUyūn Akhbār al-Riḍā***, vol. 2, pg. 6; ***Biḥār al-Anwār***, vol. 92, pg. 39.
6. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Muddaththir (74:1).
7. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah al-ʿAlaq (96:1).

then were the verses *'O' You enfolded in your mantle. Arise and warn...'*[1] revealed unto me"[2].

Hence, a group of scholars, basing their argument upon this very narration, believe Sūrah al-Muddaththir to be the first revealed chapter of the Holy Qur'ān.[3] However, the tradition itself does not automatically lead us to this conclusion; rather, it simply indicates that Jābir understood the Prophet's words as such. It is possible that the revelation of this Sūrah actually took place after the end of the three-year period called *al-fatrah*. We can safely assume this to be true, because we know that the process of divine revelation temporarily ceased after the initial communication between God and His Messenger (ṣ). Proof for this point of view can be found in another tradition, also narrated upon the authority of Jābir ibn ʿAbdullāh al-Anṣārī. He reports that, while speaking of the three-year cessation in divine revelation, the Prophet (ṣ) said,

> "As I walked my usual path, I heard a voice calling unto me from the sky. Looking up, I saw the same angel as the one that had appeared before me in the cave of Mount Ḥirā'. This sight terrified me and forced me to fall to my knees. Subsequently, I returned home and cried, 'Cover me! Cover me!' and they covered me. Only then were these verses revealed unto me: '*O' You enfolded in your mantle. Arise and warn, Glorify your Lord, Purify your inner self, And banish all trepidation....'*[4] After that event, the divine revelation descended one after the other and without pause."[5]

3. Yet another group believes Sūrah al-Fātiḥah to be the first revealed chapter within this Divine Book. Al-Zamakhsharī states, "Most of the exegetes are of the opinion that Sūrah al-Fātiḥah is the first revealed chapter of the Holy Qur'ān."

ʿAllāmah al-Ṭabarsī, quoting the book *al-Īḍāḥ* written by Aḥmad Zāhid, says: "It has been narrated, upon the authority of Saʿīd ibn al-Musayyab, that Amīr al-Mu'minīn (ʿa) said,

> 'I asked the Holy Prophet (ṣ) about the reward promised by God for the recitation of Qur'ānic chapters. The Prophet (ṣ), in response to my query, told me the reward of each chapter in the sequence of their revelation. In doing so he counted Sūrah al-Fātiḥah as the first revealed chapter, with

1. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Muddaththir (74:1-2).
2. ***Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim***, vol. 1, pg. 99; Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, ***Musnad Aḥmad***, vol.3, pg.306.
3. Refer to: Zarkashī al-, Badr al-Dīn, ***Al-Burhān fi ʿUlūm al-Qur'ān***, vol.1, pg.206.
4. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Muddaththir (74:1-5).
5. ***Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī***, vol. 1, pg. 4; ***Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim***, vol. 1, pg. 98; ***Musnad Aḥmad***, vol. 3, pg. 325.

"Read, in the name of your Lord...,"[1] as the second, and, eventually, *"Noon, I call to witness the pen..."*[2] as the last.'"[3]

Al-Wāḥidī al-Nayshābūrī, in his book *Asbāb al-Nuzūl*, speaks of how the Messenger's prophetic mission began. Therein, he reports, "Every time the Holy Prophet (ṣ) found himself alone, he would hear a voice calling out to him from the sky. This troubled him very much, until at last the voice called out his name. 'Muḥammad!' it said, and the Prophet (ṣ) replied saying, '*labbayka*!'[4] Thus, the voice called out and said, *'*Say! *In the name of Allah, Most Beneficent, Most Merciful. All praise be to Allah, Lord of all the worlds….'*[5]"[6]

Similarly, we know that the Holy Prophet (ṣ) used to perform the Islamic ritual prayer in congregation along with the tiny group he had managed to form around himself during the covert period of his mission. This group included ʿAlī, Jaʿfar, Khadījah and Zayd. This historical reality, when correlated with the fact that in Islamic law ritual prayer is void if performed without the recitation of Sūrah al-Fātiḥah, leads us to conclude that this Sūrah must have been the first chapter revealed by God unto His Messenger (ṣ). It is reported within the collected traditions of the Holy Prophet (ṣ) that the first two things taught by Jibrā'īl to the Messenger (ṣ) were the acts of minor ritual ablution (*wuḍū'*) and ritual prayer. This necessitates the revelation of Sūrah al-Fātiḥah at the same time.

Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī says, "Never was the Islamic ritual prayer performed without the recitation of *Fātiḥat al-Kitāb* (the exordium of the Book; another name for Sūrah al-Fātiḥah)."[7]

It is possible for us to reconcile these three opinions so that we arrive at a conclusion that successfully takes into consideration all the above reported accounts. It is unanimously accepted that the revelation of the first three or five verses of Sūrah al-ʿAlaq correspond chronologically with the beginning of the Prophet's mission. It is also known that after this event took place, a few verses from the beginning of Sūrah al-Muddaththir descended upon the Sacred Messenger (ṣ). However, these initial revelations merely accounted for a select portion of these said chapters and, therefore, these chapters

1. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah al-ʿAlaq (96:1).
2. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Qalam (68:1).
3. ***Tafsīr al-Ṭabarsī***, vol. 10, pg. 405; al-Zamakhsharī, ***al-Kashshāf***, vol. 4, pg. 775.
4. *labbayka* is an Arabic word that means "I am ready and at your service and command!"
5. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Fātiḥah (1:1).
6. ***Asbāb al-Nuzūl***, pg. 11.
7. ***Al-Itqān***, vol. 1, pg. 12.

remained incomplete. Sūrah al-Fātiḥah, on the other hand, was the first chapter of the Holy Qur'ān to be revealed completely and in its entirety. That is why this chapter is also known as *Fātiḥat al-Kitāb* or the Opening of the Book. The obligatory nature of the recitation of this chapter in Islamic ritual prayers indicates its extraordinary importance. In fact, its significance is considered to be equivalent to the rest of the Qur'ān put together.

﴿ وَلَقَدْ ءَاتَيْنَٰكَ سَبْعًا مِّنَ ٱلْمَثَانِى وَٱلْقُرْءَانَ ٱلْعَظِيمَ ﴾

"And certainly We have given you seven of the oft-repeated (verses) and the grand Qur'ān."[1]

According to some traditions, the phrase *"seven of the oft-repeated"* refers to the seven verses of Sūrah al-Fātiḥah.

In conclusion, if the chronological sequence of the revelation of Qur'ānic chapters were to be analyzed with reference to the start of their respective descents, the first chapter would indeed be Sūrah al-ʿAlaq, with Sūrah al-Fātiḥah being merely the fifth. Nevertheless, if we were to look at this sequence with reference to the completion of each Qur'ānic chapter, we would find that Sūrah al-Fātiḥah was indeed the very first chapter to have reached its completion before all others.

The Last Revealed Verse and Chapter

According to traditions narrated from the Ahl al-Bayt, the last revealed chapter of the Holy Qur'ān is Sūrah al-Naṣr. This chapter, apparently, foretells of the absolute victory of Islam, and goes on to speak of mass and spontaneous conversions as people flock, tribe upon tribe, towards this final divine ideology.

﴿ إِذَا جَآءَ نَصْرُ ٱللَّهِ وَٱلْفَتْحُ ۝١ وَرَأَيْتَ ٱلنَّاسَ يَدْخُلُونَ فِى دِينِ ٱللَّهِ أَفْوَاجًا ۝٢ فَسَبِّحْ بِحَمْدِ رَبِّكَ وَٱسْتَغْفِرْهُ ۚ إِنَّهُۥ كَانَ تَوَّابًۢا ۝٣ ﴾

"When there comes the help of Allah and the victory, And you see men entering the religion of Allah in companies, Then celebrate the praise of your Lord, and ask His forgiveness; surely He is oft-returning (to mercy)."[2]

Upon hearing this prophecy, the Prophet's companions rejoiced, but al-ʿAbbās, his paternal uncle, broke into tears.

"Why do you cry uncle?" the Prophet (ṣ) asked.

1. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Ḥijr (15:87).
2. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Naṣr (110:1-3).

Al-ʿAbbās replied, "I cry because I believe this chapter marks the end of your mission."

Having heard this, the Messenger (ṣ) said, "It is indeed as you say!"

The Holy Prophet (ṣ) passed away two years after the descent of this chapter.[1]

Imam al-Ṣādiq (ʿa) is narrated to have said,

> "The last chapter of the Qur'ān is: '*When the help of God arrives and victory...*'"[2]

Similarly, Ibn ʿAbbās believes Sūrah al-Naṣr to be the last Qur'ānic chapter.[3] However, another tradition deems Sūrah al-Tawbah to be the final Qur'ānic chapter, the first few verses of which were revealed in the year 9 A.H. (verses which the Prophet ordered Imam ʿAlī (ʿa) to recite in front of the polytheists in Makkah).[4] This chapter is also called Sūrah Barā'ah.

At the same time, several other traditions report that the last verse to descend upon the Prophet (ṣ) was as follows:

﴿وَٱتَّقُواْ يَوۡمٗا تُرۡجَعُونَ فِيهِ إِلَى ٱللَّهِۖ ثُمَّ تُوَفَّىٰ كُلُّ نَفۡسٖ مَّا كَسَبَتۡ وَهُمۡ لَا يُظۡلَمُونَ﴾

"And guard yourselves against a day in which you shall be returned to Allah; then every soul shall be paid back in full what it has earned, and they shall not be dealt with unjustly."[5]

The Archangel Gabriel brought it down for the Holy Prophet (ṣ) and said, "Place it in between the verses of usury and the verse of debt in Sūrah al-Baqarah."

Thus, the given piece of revelation was placed immediately after verse 280 of the said chapter. After this event took place, the Prophet (ṣ) lived no more than twenty one or, according to some other reports, seven additional days.[6]

Aḥmad ibn Ab-Yaʿqūb, popularly known as Ibn Wāḍiḥ al-Yaʿqūbī (who passed away after 292 A.H.), writes in his book, "It is said that the last verse revealed upon the Holy Prophet (ṣ) was: *'Today I have perfected your system of belief and bestowed My favors upon you in full, and have chosen*

1. ***Tafsīr al-Ṭabarsī***, vol. 10, pg. 554.
2. ***Tafsīr Al-Burhān***, vol. 1, pg. 29.
3. ***al-Itqān***, vol. 1, pg. 27.
4. ***Tafsīr al-Ṣāfī***, vol. 1, pg. 680.
5. The Holy Qur'ān, al-Baqarah (2:281).
6. ***Tafsīr Shubbar,*** pg. 83.

submission (al-Islam) as the creed for you.'"[1]

He goes on to say, "Indeed this is the most correct report to have reached us with regard to this issue. The descent of this verse coincides with the appointment of our master Amīr al-Mu'minīn Imam ʿAlī ibn Abī-Ṭālib (ʿa) at Spring Khumm (*ghadīr khumm*) as the next leader of the Muslim community."[2]

It is true that the revelation of Sūrah al-Naṣr precedes that of Sūrah al-Tawbah, since the first was revealed during the conquest of Makkah in 8 A.H. (also known as the Year of Victory), whereas the revelation of the second came about in 9 A.H. However, it is possible to reconcile these two narrations by taking into account the different perspectives involved. Sūrah al-Naṣr was the last complete chapter to be revealed, so it qualifies as being the final Qur'ānic chapter from that point of view. At the same time, Sūrah al-Tawbah, due the late descent of its initial verses, also qualifies as the last revealed chapter of the Holy Qur'ān.

However, verse 281 of Sūrah al-Baqarah could not have been the last revealed verse of the Holy Qur'ān. This is because its revelation took place at Minā in the year of the Farewell Pilgrimage (i.e. the last ritual Ḥajj pilgrimage undertaken by the Holy Prophet), whereas verse 3 of Sūrah al-Mā'idah (also known as the verse of Completion) descended upon the Holy Prophet (ṣ) after the event of declaring Imam ʿAlī (ʿa) as the next leader at Ghadīr Khumm, later on in the same year.[3] Therefore, the narration of Ibn Wāḍiḥ al-Yaʿqūbī seems much more accurate.

In addition to the discussion presented above, we see that Sūrah al-Mā'idah deals mostly with the end of hostilities and the consolidation of the Islamic state, especially the verse of Completion that marks the end of the Prophet's mission. This trend fits the chapter's position perfectly, as the last Qur'ānic chapter containing the last revealed verse.

Hence, in summary of the above discussion, we find Sūrah al-Naṣr to be the last "complete" chapter of the Holy Qur'ān, with its descent in the Year of Victory. Likewise, the verse of Completion qualifies as the last verse of the Holy Qur'ān to be revealed. Nevertheless, if we take into account only those verses of the Holy Qur'ān that deal specifically with divine law, verse 281 of Sūrah al-Baqarah will qualify as the last Qur'ānic verse to be revealed within this particular genre.

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1. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Mā'idah (5:3).
2. Yaʿqūbī al-, Ibn Wāḍiḥ, ***Tafsīr al-Yaʿqūbī***, vol. 2, pg. 35.
3. ***Al-Burhān***, vol. 1, pg. 210.

Makkan and Madīnite Verses and the Utility of their Distribution as Such

One of the important matters dealt with in the field of Qur'ānic studies is the distribution of Qur'ānic verses into Makkan and Madīnite ones. This categorization is significant because it yields the following benefits:

1. Such a categorization allows us to appreciate the historical context of Qur'ānic verses and helps us comprehend the gradual nature of this divine text's descent. It is natural for human beings to investigate historical matters and, in doing so, they discover the context surrounding a particular historical event. This leads man to understand these particular events in a more complete manner. In fact this is exactly how the science of history came into being. The historical circumstances surrounding each Qur'ānic verse are pivotally important for exactly the same reason.

2. A correct comprehension of the meaning of Qur'ānic verses is dependent upon a correct and comprehensive appreciation of the historical context in which these verses were revealed. This is especially true in the field of jurisprudence where the jurist must extract divine law from Qur'ānic verses and traditions of the Prophet (ṣ) and his progeny. In several verses there seems to be a legal ruling but, upon referring to the time of their descent, we come to the conclusion that such a legal ruling could not have been the purpose of these said verses. This conclusion, thus, leads us to interpret these verses in a different manner. One such example is the juristic discussion surrounding a disbeliever's duty vis-à-vis divine law. Most jurists believe that a disbeliever has no obligation towards divine law, and the obligation to act in accordance to God's law comes about only when a person converts to Islam. However, a few jurists believe that regardless of a person's religion, every human being is obliged to obey God's law. In support of their ruling, they cite verse 7 of Sūrah Fuṣṣilat, a verse that condemns disbelievers because of their non-dispensation of obligatory poor dues called *zakāt.* However, upon referring to the historical context, we see that this verse is, in fact, Makkan, whereas we know that the Zakāt levy was not made obligatory, even upon the Muslims, until after the Prophet's migration to al-Madīnah. Thus, we are forced find a better interpretation for the contents of this particular verse. Two such interpretations are as follows:

a) The word *zakāt*, in this verse, refers to non-obligatory alms and acts of charity, acts which were shunned as irrelevant by the disbelievers.

b) The word *zakāt* indeed refers to obligatory poor dues made compulsory within Islamic law. However, God rebuked the disbelievers with regard to this issue because they, due to their stubborn opposition to Islam, had

rendered themselves incapable to being included in this act of communal worship and obedience. This is true, since the very minimum criteria for the acceptance of Zakāt is that it be dispensed with the intention of seeking God's spiritual proximity. Such an act can not exist alongside polytheism.[1]

3. In discussions connected to theology or *'ilm al-kalām*, especially when dealing with verses related to the lofty characteristics and virtues of the Ahl al-Bayt, we find that the issue of Makkan and Madīnite verses becomes extensively relevant. Since the topic of the Ahl al-Bayt's virtues was more applicable to the Madīnite period of the Prophet's lifetime, most of the verses praising his family were revealed after his migration to that city. However, according to a few scholars, these oft-cited chapters and verses are in fact Makkan and, thus, do not constitute evidence indicative of the moral superiority of the Ahl al-Bayt. From here we can appreciate the crucial significance of a correct and accurate identification of such verses, especially when contemplating upon issues related to the discussion of Imamate or Leadership. For example, some have claimed Sūrah al-Insān (also known as Sūrah al-Dahr) to be, in its totality, a Makkan chapter, while another group claims it to be Madīnite, in its entirety. However, there are also those who believe that the whole chapter is Madīnite except verse 24. Yet another group claims that the first portion of this chapter, up until verse 22, is Makkan and the rest is Madīnite. In short, there exist many differing points of view with regard to this issue. We, however, hold that this chapter is Madīnite in its entirety.

﴿ يُوفُونَ بِٱلنَّذۡرِ وَيَخَافُونَ يَوۡمٗا كَانَ شَرُّهُۥ مُسۡتَطِيرٗا ۝٧ وَيُطۡعِمُونَ ٱلطَّعَامَ عَلَىٰ حُبِّهِۦ مِسۡكِينٗا
وَيَتِيمٗا وَأَسِيرًا ۝٨ إِنَّمَا نُطۡعِمُكُمۡ لِوَجۡهِ ٱللَّهِ لَا نُرِيدُ مِنكُمۡ جَزَآءٗ وَلَا شُكُورًا ۝٩ إِنَّا نَخَافُ مِن رَّبِّنَا
يَوۡمًا عَبُوسٗا قَمۡطَرِيرٗا ۝١٠ فَوَقَىٰهُمُ ٱللَّهُ شَرَّ ذَٰلِكَ ٱلۡيَوۡمِ وَلَقَّىٰهُمۡ نَضۡرَةٗ وَسُرُورٗا ۝١١ وَجَزَىٰهُم بِمَا
صَبَرُواْ جَنَّةٗ وَحَرِيرٗا ۝١٢ ﴾

"They fulfill vows and fear a day the evil of which shall be spreading far and wide. And they give food out of love for Him to the poor and the orphan and the captive: We only feed you for Allah's sake; we desire from you neither reward nor thanks: Surely we fear from our Lord a stern, distressful day. Therefore Allah will guard them from the evil of that day and cause them to meet with ease and happiness; And reward them, because they were patient, with garden and silk,"[2]

1. Refer to ***Tafsīr al-Ṭabarsī***, vol. 9, pg. 4-5; ***al-Mīzān***, vol. 17, pg. 383-384.
2. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Insān (76:7-12).

The following event has been mentioned in clarification of the circumstances surrounding the descent of the above verses. Al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn (ʿa), the two beloved grandsons of the Prophet (ṣ), had fallen ill. The Prophet (ṣ), along with several chieftains, had come to the house of ʿAlī ibn Abī-Ṭālib (ʿa) to inquire about their health. This group advised ʿAlī (ʿa) to take upon himself an offering so that God would bestow good health upon his sons more quickly. ʿAlī (ʿa) agreed to this task and promised to fast, from dawn to dusk, for a period of three days in thanks to God's mercy. When the children regained their health, ʿAlī (ʿa) began his fasting period in accordance to what he had pledged. For this purpose he prepared three loafs of bread to eat upon the completion of each daily fast. After fasting all day long, ʿAlī (ʿa) was about to eat his loaf of bread when an orphan knocked upon his door and asked for food. ʿAlī (ʿa) complied and handed his loaf of bread to the hungry orphan. Coincidentally, the event repeated itself the next day and ʿAlī (ʿa) behaved in a similar manner once again. On the third day, a prisoner knocked upon his door and asked for food and drink. Once again, ʿAlī (ʿa) handed over his loaf of bread in order to feed the needy. In short, ʿAlī (ʿa) fasted three complete days with only dry leftover bread and water for himself at the end of each daily fast.

Shaykh al-Ṭabarsī, quotes numerous sources from the Ahl al-Sunnah and the Ahl al-Bayt (ʿa) in corroboration of this story, and declares that there exists a near consensus amongst the exegetes with reference to this matter. He also holds that the said chapter is Madīnite and presents several strong narrations, pertaining to the sequence of descent of Qur'ānic chapters, as evidence of this claim.[1] Nevertheless, individuals, like ʿAbdullāh ibn al-Zubayr, have always remained adamant in their efforts to prevent the attribution of this chapter to the Ahl al-Bayt (ʿa).[2] Therefore, they have claimed this entire chapter to be Makkan, despite the obvious inaccuracy of their claims. In the Makkan era, there did not exist any prisoners. It was only after the establishment of an Islamic state in al-Madīnah that armed conflict took place and, as a result, individuals were captured and made to stay with their captors as prisoners. Mujāhid and Qutādah, from amongst the first generation of disciples, definitively declare this chapter to be entirely Madīnite. However, some others believed that a portion of this chapter was revealed in Makkah, while the rest was revealed in al-Madīnah.[3] Sayyid Quṭb, from amongst contemporary scholars, believes the chapter to be

1. Refer to ***Tafsīr al-Ṭabarsī***, vol. 10, pg. 404-406; al-Ḥākim al-Ḥasakānī, ***Shawāhid al-Tanzīl***, pg. 299-315.
2. ***Al-Durr al-Manthūr***, vol. 6, pg. 297.
3. ***Al-Tamhīd***, vol. 1, pg. 154-155.

Makkan.[1]

4. Many problems, pertaining to various Islamic fields of study, are resolvable only if proper identification and distribution of Makkan and Madīnite chapters and verses takes place. For example, some have chosen the path of extremism when dealing with the matter of abrogation (or *naksh*), especially with regard to the abrogation of verses via other verses of the Holy Qur'ān. One such group declares that the total number of abrogated verses is more than 220, a number that cannot possibly be correct. Others have chosen another kind of extremism, declaring that abrogation, in itself, is impossible. They believe that any possibility of abrogation would be in contradiction the contents of this following verse:[2]

﴿أَفَلَا يَتَدَبَّرُونَ ٱلْقُرْءَانَ ۚ وَلَوْ كَانَ مِنْ عِندِ غَيْرِ ٱللَّهِ لَوَجَدُوا۟ فِيهِ ٱخْتِلَٰفًا كَثِيرًا﴾

"Do they not then meditate on the Qur'ān? And if it were from any other than Allah, they would have found in it many a discrepancy."[3]

Another group adheres to a more balanced approach and identifies the number of abrogated verses in a much more rational manner.
From amongst the verses that the first group believes to have been abrogated is this:

﴿ فَمَا ٱسْتَمْتَعْتُم بِهِۦ مِنْهُنَّ فَـَٔاتُوهُنَّ أُجُورَهُنَّ ﴾

"Then as to those whom you profit by, give them their dowries ..."[4]

This verse deals with the law of temporary marriage. According to Muḥammad ibn Idrīs al-Shāfiʿī, the Qur'ānic verses that have supposedly abrogated this verse are as follows:

﴿ وَٱلَّذِينَ هُمْ لِفُرُوجِهِمْ حَٰفِظُونَ ۝٥ إِلَّا عَلَىٰٓ أَزْوَٰجِهِمْ أَوْ مَا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَٰنُهُمْ فَإِنَّهُمْ غَيْرُ مَلُومِينَ ۝٦ فَمَنِ ٱبْتَغَىٰ وَرَآءَ ذَٰلِكَ فَأُو۟لَٰٓئِكَ هُمُ ٱلْعَادُونَ ۝٧﴾

"And who guard their private parts, except before their mates or those whom their right hands possess, for they surely are not blamable, But whoever seeks to go beyond that, these are they that exceed the limits;"[5]

1. ***Fī Ẓilāl al-Qur'ān***, vol. 29, pg. 215.
2. Abu'l-Qāsim al-Khū'ī, ***Al-Bayān fi Tafsīr al-Qur'ān***, pg. 206.
3. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Nisā' (4:82).
4. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Nisā' (4:24).
5. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Mu'minūn (23:5-7).

This opinion is invalid because of two main reasons. Firstly, women taken into temporary marriage are considered wives. Even though the laws pertaining to this kind of marriage differ slightly from those related to permanent matrimony, the legal status of a woman in both circumstances is that of a wife. Secondly, the proposed abrogating verses belong to Sūrah al-Mu'minūn, which is Makkan in its entirety, without anyone claiming any exceptions from amongst its verses. At the same time, the abrogated verse is from amongst Madīnite verses. It is quite clear that a verse being abrogated must precede, chronologically, the verse abrogating it. The renowned teacher al-Zarqānī has also mentioned this point in his book.[1]

The Criterion of Categorizing a Chapter as Makkan or Madīnite

From the statistics made available to us by traditions dealing with the chronological sequence of the descent of Qur'ānic chapters, we know that the Qur'ān contains 86 Makkan chapters and 28 Madīnite ones. This categorization has been made in accordance with three basic principles. We shall be elaborate upon them in what follows:

The Criterion of Time: Most exegetes believe that the migration of the Holy Prophet (ṣ) from Makkah to al-Madīnah forms the criterion for distinguishing Makkan chapters from Madīnite ones. Every chapter revealed before this migration is Makkan, while those revealed after it are termed Madīnite. According to this criterion, the geographical location of the Holy Prophet (ṣ), during the revelation of a particular verse or chapter is not important. A chapter or verse revealed, during the Ḥajj in Makkah, or during a trip to the city, or even during its conquest, will nevertheless, be categorized as Madīnite, since its revelation occurred after the migration had taken place. Herein, the phrase *"after migration"* is defined as the time starting from the entrance of the Holy Prophet (ṣ) into the city of al-Madīnah. Therefore, verses revealed after the Prophet's exit from Makkah but before his eventual entry into al-Madīnah are to be considered Makkan, even though the process of migration had already started. For example, the following verse falls into the category of Makkan verses, even though its revelation took place during the Prophet's journey to al-Madīnah:

﴿ إِنَّ ٱلَّذِى فَرَضَ عَلَيۡكَ ٱلۡقُرۡءَانَ لَرَآدُّكَ إِلَىٰ مَعَادٍۚ قُل رَّبِّىٓ أَعۡلَمُ مَن جَآءَ بِٱلۡهُدَىٰ وَمَنۡ هُوَ فِى ضَلَٰلٍ مُّبِينٍ ﴾

"Most surely He Who has made the Qur'ān binding on you will bring you back to the destination. Say: My Lord knows best he who has brought the guidance and he

1. Zarqānī al-, Muḥammad ʿAbd al-ʿAẓīm, ***Manāhil al-ʿIrfān***, vol. 1, pg. 195.

who is in manifest error."[1]

The Criterion of Location: According to this principle, all verses revealed in or around Makkah are classified as Makkan and all verses revealed in or around al-Madīnah are classified as Madīnite, regardless of whether their descent took place before the migration or after it. Apart from these two locations, all verses revealed somewhere else are categorized into a third classification. Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī quotes the Holy Prophet (ṣ) as having said,

> "It (revelation) descended in three locations, Makkah, al-Madīnah and Shām."

Ibn Kathīr believes that by *Shām* the Prophet (ṣ) meant Tabūk.[2]

The Criterion of the Addressees in the Chapter: According to this standard, every chapter that addresses the polytheists is considered Makkan, and every chapter addressing the Muslims in categorized as Madīnite. In corroboration of this view, a tradition of the Holy Prophet (ṣ), narrated by ʿAbdullāh ibn Masʿūd, is used as proof. In this tradition the Holy Prophet (ṣ) is narrated to have said that every chapter beginning with the phrase *"O' people!"* is Makkan, whereas any chapter starting with the phrase *"O' you who believe!"* is Madīnite.[3] The rationale behind this criterion is that in Makkah the polytheists were in majority and therefore the Qur'ān's focus was centered on them, whereas in al-Madīnah the dominant force were the Muslims and, as a result, the Qur'ān's attentions came to be dedicated towards them. However, even in Madīnite chapters, like Sūrah al-Baqarah, we find the phrase *"O' people!"* having been used. This fact creates grave doubts about the authenticity of the above-mentioned tradition.

None of the above stated criteria can, in itself, be considered comprehensive in nature. In fact, if we seek to derive a comprehensive standard for this issue, we must amalgamate all the above said principles so that a new standard comes into existence. This compound standard must take into account three pivotal factors (1) explicit textual meaning, (2) the visible evidence found in a particular chapter along with its overall construction, and (3) evidence dealing with the content and subject matter of the said chapter.

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1. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Qaṣaṣ (28:85).
2. ***Al-Itqān***, vol. 1, pg. 23.
3. ***Al-Mustadrak***, vol. 3, pg. 18-19.

Burhān al-Dīn Ibrāhīm ibn ʿUmar ibn Ibrāhīm al-Jaʿbarī (deceased 732 A.H.) says, "There are only two ways to identify whether a chapter is Makkan or Madīnite. The first is through transmitted evidence in the shape of prophetic traditions, and the second is intellectual evidence. If the second were to be used, the process of identification narrated by ʿAlqamah ibn Qays (deceased 62 A.H.), on the authority of ʿAbdullāh ibn Masʿūd, must be put into effect. This process dictates that if a chapter contains the phrase *"O' people!"* or comprises of the word *"Nay!"* or starts with detached alphabets,[1] or describes the story of Adam and Satan, or discusses the events surrounding the lives of past prophets and nations, then this chapter must be deemed Makkan (Although, lengthier chapters, even if they describe the story of Adam and Satan, are exempted from this rule. Furthermore, Sūrah al-Baqarah, Sūrah Āl-ʿImrān, and Sūrah al-Raʿd are also deemed Madīnite despite their compatibility with the above said criteria). In comparison, every chapter that talks of doctrinal law, defines practical responsibilities and prescribes penalties is to be considered a Madīnite chapter."[2]

Others have listed some additional characteristics to be taken into consideration before deeming a certain chapter as being Makkan or Madīnite. These are as follows:

1. Usually Makkan chapters are short and contain short verses, whereas Madīnite chapters are much longer, and consist of longer verses.

2. Makkan chapters are normally, more severely toned, since they seek to rebuke the polytheists for their stubborn opposition to God's final religion. In comparison, Madīnite chapters incorporate a mild and sympathetic tenor, because the audience they address is Muslim.

3. Makkan chapters revolve around ideological issues dealing with faith and the inherent truth of the Islamic creed, while Madīnite chapters are more focused on doctrinal law and divine edicts concerning different facets of Muslim life.

4. Makkan chapters characteristically invite Muslims to exercise resoluteness with regard to moral principles and ideological foundations. They also call upon the faithful to exercise sternness towards the baseless fantasies of the polytheists. In contrast, Madīnite chapters address the *Ahl al-Kitāb*, or People of the Book, (followers of past divine scriptures, namely the Jews,

1. Translator's Note: By "detached alphabets" we mean groups of alphabets found together, without actually forming a word, at the beginning of certain Qur'ānic chapters e.g. Sūrah al-Baqarah which begins with the Arabic alphabets *Alif-Lām-Mīm*.
2. ***Al-Burhān***, vol. 1, pg. 189.

Christians and Sabians) inviting them towards Islam. These chapters advise Muslims to be moderate in their behavior. Furthermore, they also seek to unveil the threat posed by hypocrites, who exist as the enemy's fifth column inside Muslim society.

5. Normally, if a chapter addresses a group of people using the phrase, *"O' people!"* then this chapter is to be deemed Makkan. However, if the address incorporates the phrase *"O' you who believe!"* then the said chapter is to be considered Madīnite.

It is important to note that these characteristics are not part of a hard and fast rule; in fact they are quite general in nature and serve merely as guidelines. They are useful only if a few of them are found together in a particular chapter, thereby indicating it as being Makkan or Madīnite, provided that there be no explicit textual proof indicating the contrary. With all these pre-requisites combined, we are able to attain a level of certainty that allows us to use this information in fields such as jurisprudence, history and the like.

In short, we basically have two broad divisions within criteria controlling the identification of a chapter as Makkan or Madīnite. The first being *naqlī*, or transmitted evidence in the shape of narrated traditions, and the second being *ijtihādī*, or evidence derived from contextual and environmental clues within the chapters themselves.

Argument Presented in Negation of the Makkan/Madīnite Classification of Qur'ānic Chapters

Most of the criticism regarding this topic has been put forward by Orientalists. In doing so, they have sought to argue that the Qur'ān is a product of the environment in which it came into being. By this, they mean that the said book is not divine in origin but a text significantly subordinate to the society in which it developed. However, the point they fail to appreciate is the difference between "being a product of environmental factors," and "being synchronous with them, to institute fundamental change." It is clear that if a person seeks to affect his surroundings he must first attain a certain level of compatibility with the existing environment. He must speak with the people in their tongue, presenting his ideas in a comprehensible manner that corresponds to the cultural background of his audience. Therefore, it is of absolute importance that the environment of a certain geographic and temporal location be understood, so that it may be taken into service towards forwarding one's own objectives. However, if one's methods are in stark contrast to the societal situation existing in a certain place and time, this contradiction will most certainly render one's efforts fruitless and void.

Thus, there is a huge difference between these two approaches. The first dictates that one be subordinate and submissive to the society that surrounds him, while the latter describes effective usage of the environmental status quo so as to efficiently fulfill one's own purposes. As an example, let us analyze a society that holds the faculty of literary excellence and aesthetics in great esteem. In order to excel in one's mission within such a society, one must present one's ideas in an erudite and artistic mould, using fine tuned words and sentences that appeal to the literary taste of the audience. This task would, in turn, render the audience more perceptive towards the message being propagated.

Herein, we see that through a precise understanding of the subtle difference explained above, we are able to isolate the negative from the positive approach involved in such issues. It is indeed not commendable for a scripture to merely reflect the society in which it originated. In fact, a text which continuously adjusts itself in order to fit within the standards of a society it seeks to reform, is not qualified to be called a scripture. However, a text that uses the salient features of a society it addresses, in order to transmit its own message more effectively, must indeed, be declared a sheer masterpiece.

After this short introduction, we now move on to present the actual arguments raised with regard to the issue at hand:

1. It is said that Makkan chapters incorporate a harsh tone because the society in the Makkan period was harshly and adamantly opposed to the message of the Qur'ān. However, Madīnite chapters tend to be smooth and sympathetic, in correspondence to the calm and appreciative stance of the people of al-Madīnah vis-à-vis Islam and its teachings. Therefore, opponents conclude that since the Qur'ān has dealt with two opposite societal situations using one methodology i.e. answering like with like (rejection with rejection and acceptance with acceptance) it, as a text, is strongly susceptible to the environment that it developed in. Thus, the Qur'ān is declared to be devoid of an independent methodology and its text is labeled responsive and reactive in nature.

In answer to this criticism we say: Firstly, the Qur'ān's harsh tone is not something entirely particular to Makkan chapters. In fact, there exist examples of this kind of language even within Madīnite chapters. In reality, if the audience in al-Madīnah had also been stubborn and obstinate in its behavior, the tone of the Qur'ān would have been for them what it was for the polytheists of Makkah. It is only logical that suitable weaponry be employed for each of one's battles. The choice of tone and language incorporated in the Qur'ān is indicative to its intellectual greatness, and certainly not an evidence of weakness.

We read in Sūrah al-Baqarah:

﴿ ٱلَّذِينَ يَأۡكُلُونَ ٱلرِّبَوٰاْ لَا يَقُومُونَ إِلَّا كَمَا يَقُومُ ٱلَّذِي يَتَخَبَّطُهُ ٱلشَّيۡطَٰنُ مِنَ ٱلۡمَسِّۚ ذَٰلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمۡ قَالُوٓاْ إِنَّمَا ٱلۡبَيۡعُ مِثۡلُ ٱلرِّبَوٰاْۗ وَأَحَلَّ ٱللَّهُ ٱلۡبَيۡعَ وَحَرَّمَ ٱلرِّبَوٰاْۚ فَمَن جَآءَهُۥ مَوۡعِظَةٞ مِّن رَّبِّهِۦ فَٱنتَهَىٰ فَلَهُۥ مَا سَلَفَ وَأَمۡرُهُۥٓ إِلَى ٱللَّهِۖ وَمَنۡ عَادَ فَأُوْلَٰٓئِكَ أَصۡحَٰبُ ٱلنَّارِۖ هُمۡ فِيهَا خَٰلِدُونَ ﴾

"Those who swallow down usury cannot arise except as one whom Satan has prostrated by (his) touch does rise. That is because they say, trading is only like usury; and Allah has allowed trading and forbidden usury. To whomsoever then the admonition has come from his Lord, then he desists, he shall have what has already passed, and his affair is in the hands of Allah; and whoever returns (to it)-- these are the inmates of the fire; they shall abide in it."[1]

﴿ يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُواْ ٱتَّقُواْ ٱللَّهَ وَذَرُواْ مَا بَقِيَ مِنَ ٱلرِّبَوٰٓاْ إِن كُنتُم مُّؤۡمِنِينَ ٢٧٨ فَإِن لَّمۡ تَفۡعَلُواْ فَأۡذَنُواْ بِحَرۡبٖ مِّنَ ٱللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِۦۖ وَإِن تُبۡتُمۡ فَلَكُمۡ رُءُوسُ أَمۡوَٰلِكُمۡ لَا تَظۡلِمُونَ وَلَا تُظۡلَمُونَ ﴾

"O you who believe! Be careful of (your duty to) Allah and relinquish what remains (due) from usury, if you are believers. But if you do (it) not, then be apprised of war from Allah and His Apostle; and if you repent, then you shall have your capital; neither shall you make (the debtor) suffer loss, nor shall you be made to suffer loss."[2]

﴿ فَإِن لَّمۡ تَفۡعَلُواْ وَلَن تَفۡعَلُواْ فَٱتَّقُواْ ٱلنَّارَ ٱلَّتِي وَقُودُهَا ٱلنَّاسُ وَٱلۡحِجَارَةُۖ أُعِدَّتۡ لِلۡكَٰفِرِينَ ﴾

"But if you do (it) not and never shall you do (it), then be on your guard against the fire of which men and stones are the fuel; it is prepared for the unbelievers."[3]

Similarly, chapters rebuking the hypocrites, and those revealed in admonishment of the stubborn prejudice shown by the *People of the Book*, are at times, even more harshly toned than chapters revealed in Makkah. In fact, the harshest of all Qur'ānic chapters is Sūrah al-Tawbah, even though it is one the very last chapters revealed in al-Madīnah. Despite being Madīnite,

1. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Baqarah (2:275).
2. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Baqarah (2:278-279).
3. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Baqarah (2:24).

this chapter addresses polytheists and anyone else bent on blind enmity towards Islam.

However, in contrast to the above, we see many Makkan chapters that are soft toned and were revealed in situations where there was no need to employ harshness.

﴿ قُلۡ يَٰعِبَادِيَ ٱلَّذِينَ أَسۡرَفُواْ عَلَىٰٓ أَنفُسِهِمۡ لَا تَقۡنَطُواْ مِن رَّحۡمَةِ ٱللَّهِۚ إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ يَغۡفِرُ ٱلذُّنُوبَ جَمِيعًاۚ إِنَّهُۥ هُوَ ٱلۡغَفُورُ ٱلرَّحِيمُ ﴾

"Say: O my servants! who have acted extravagantly against their own souls, do not despair of the mercy of Allah; surely Allah forgives the faults altogether; surely He is the Forgiving the Merciful."[1]

﴿ وَلَقَدۡ ءَاتَيۡنَٰكَ سَبۡعٗا مِّنَ ٱلۡمَثَانِي وَٱلۡقُرۡءَانَ ٱلۡعَظِيمَ ٨٧ لَا تَمُدَّنَّ عَيۡنَيۡكَ إِلَىٰ مَا مَتَّعۡنَا بِهِۦٓ أَزۡوَٰجٗا مِّنۡهُمۡ وَلَا تَحۡزَنۡ عَلَيۡهِمۡ وَٱخۡفِضۡ جَنَاحَكَ لِلۡمُؤۡمِنِينَ ٨٨ ﴾

"And certainly We have given you seven of the oft-repeated (verses) and the grand Qur'ān. Do not strain your eyes after what We have given certain classes of them to enjoy, and do not grieve for them, and make yourself gentle to the believers."[2]

﴿ قَالُوٓاْ أَرۡجِهۡ وَأَخَاهُ وَٱبۡعَثۡ فِي ٱلۡمَدَآئِنِ حَٰشِرِينَ ٣٦ يَأۡتُوكَ بِكُلِّ سَحَّارٍ عَلِيمٖ ٣٧ فَجُمِعَ ٱلسَّحَرَةُ لِمِيقَٰتِ يَوۡمٖ مَّعۡلُومٖ ٣٨ ﴾

"They said: Give him and his brother respite and send heralds into the cities that they should bring to you every skillful magician. So the magicians were gathered together at the appointed time on the fixed day,"[3]

2. Critics argue that verses and chapters revealed in Makkah were short and to the point, in agreement with the lack of education and civility present within Makkan society. However, the Qur'ān shifts to longer verses and chapters when it finds itself in Madīnite society, a society comparatively more educated and civilized.

In reply, we state: Firstly, speaking in a manner that agrees and is compatible to the environment in which this speech takes place, indicates intellectual

1. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Zumar (39:53).
2. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Ḥijr (15:87-88).
3. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Shuʿarā' (26:36-38).

maturity and rhetorical finesse. Secondly, some Makkan chapters are also quite lengthy e.g. Sūrah al-Anʿām (165 verses), Sūrah al-Aʿrāf (206 verses), Sūrah al-Isrā' (111 verses), Sūrah al-Kahf (110 verses), Sūrah Ṭā-Hā (135 verses), Sūrah Maryam (98 verses), Sūrah al-Anbiyā' (112 verses) and Sūrah al-Mu'minūn (118 verses). Similarly, we also find shorter chapters that are Madīnite e.g. Sūrah al-Naṣr and Sūrah al-Zalzalah.

3. Another criticism is that there exists no presentation of doctrinal law in Makkan chapters.

The mere existence of certain verses dealing with legal issues is enough to refute this claim. Verses 141-146 of Sūrah al-Anʿām explain laws related to the consumption of fruits and animals. Verses 151-152 of the same chapter relate issues concerning lawful and prohibited acts and earnings. Verses 31-33 of Sūrah al-Aʿrāf define laws related to the lawful and prohibited use of jewelry, as well as legal rulings related to indecencies and other similar issues. Also in Sūrah al-Isrā' we find several explicit legal rulings concerned with moral standards, the observance of which is obligatory upon Muslims. Therefore, any claim pertaining to the absolute absence of jurisprudential matters from Makkan chapters is simply without foundation.

4. It is claimed that Makkan chapters are devoid of logical argumentation, whereas Madīnite chapters incorporate deductive reasoning and inferential polemics.

Reply: This assertion is also unsubstantiated. In Sūrah Al-Mu'minūn we find the Qur'ān arguing in negation of God having a partner or a son:

﴿ مَا ٱتَّخَذَ ٱللَّهُ مِن وَلَدٍ وَمَا كَانَ مَعَهُۥ مِنْ إِلَٰهٍ ۚ إِذًا لَّذَهَبَ كُلُّ إِلَٰهٍۭ بِمَا خَلَقَ وَلَعَلَا بَعْضُهُمْ عَلَىٰ بَعْضٍ ۚ سُبْحَٰنَ ٱللَّهِ عَمَّا يَصِفُونَ ﴾

"Never did Allah take to Himself a son, and never was there with him any (other) god-- in that case each god would have certainly taken away what he created, and some of them would certainly have overpowered others; glory be to Allah above what they describe!"[1]

Then in Sūrah al-Anbiyā':

﴿ لَوْ كَانَ فِيهِمَآ ءَالِهَةٌ إِلَّا ٱللَّهُ لَفَسَدَتَا ۚ فَسُبْحَٰنَ ٱللَّهِ رَبِّ ٱلْعَرْشِ عَمَّا يَصِفُونَ ﴿٢٢﴾ لَا يُسْـَٔلُ عَمَّا يَفْعَلُ وَهُمْ يُسْـَٔلُونَ ﴿٢٣﴾ أَمِ ٱتَّخَذُوا۟ مِن دُونِهِۦٓ ءَالِهَةً ۖ قُلْ هَاتُوا۟ بُرْهَٰنَكُمْ ۖ هَٰذَا ذِكْرُ مَن مَّعِىَ

1. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Mu'minūn (23:91).

وَذِكۡرُ مَن قَبۡلِي ۗ بَلۡ أَكۡثَرُهُمۡ لَا يَعۡلَمُونَ ٱلۡحَقَّ ۖ فَهُم مُّعۡرِضُونَ ﴾

"If there had been in them any gods except Allah, they would both have certainly been in a state of disorder; therefore glory be to Allah, the Lord of the dominion, above what they attribute (to Him). He cannot be questioned concerning what He does and they shall be questioned. Or, have they taken gods besides Him? Say: Bring your proof; this is the reminder of those with me and the reminder of those before me. Nay! most of them do not know the truth, so they turn aside."[1]

Similarly, in Sūrah al-ʿAnkabūt, arguments are presented to prove the veracity of prophethood:

﴿وَمَا كُنتَ تَتۡلُواْ مِن قَبۡلِهِۦ مِن كِتَٰبٖ وَلَا تَخُطُّهُۥ بِيَمِينِكَ ۖ إِذٗا لَّٱرۡتَابَ ٱلۡمُبۡطِلُونَ ۝٤٨ بَلۡ هُوَ ءَايَٰتُۢ بَيِّنَٰتٞ فِي صُدُورِ ٱلَّذِينَ أُوتُواْ ٱلۡعِلۡمَۚ وَمَا يَجۡحَدُ بِـَٔايَٰتِنَآ إِلَّا ٱلظَّٰلِمُونَ ۝٤٩ وَقَالُواْ لَوۡلَآ أُنزِلَ عَلَيۡهِ ءَايَٰتٞ مِّن رَّبِّهِۦۖ قُلۡ إِنَّمَا ٱلۡأٓيَٰتُ عِندَ ٱللَّهِ وَإِنَّمَآ أَنَا۠ نَذِيرٞ مُّبِينٌ ۝٥٠ أَوَلَمۡ يَكۡفِهِمۡ أَنَّآ أَنزَلۡنَا عَلَيۡكَ ٱلۡكِتَٰبَ يُتۡلَىٰ عَلَيۡهِمۡۚ إِنَّ فِي ذَٰلِكَ لَرَحۡمَةٗ وَذِكۡرَىٰ لِقَوۡمٖ يُؤۡمِنُونَ ﴾

"And you did not recite before it any book, nor did you transcribe one with your right hand, for then could those who say untrue things have doubted. Nay! these are clear communications in the breasts of those who are granted knowledge; and none deny Our communications except the unjust. And they say: Why are not signs sent down upon him from his Lord? Say: The signs are only with Allah, and I am only a plain warner. Is it not enough for them that We have revealed to you the Book which is recited to them? Most surely there is mercy in this and a reminder for a people who believe."[2]

In Sūrah Qāf, we see reasoning presented in support of the Day of Resurrection:

﴿ وَنَزَّلۡنَا مِنَ ٱلسَّمَآءِ مَآءٗ مُّبَٰرَكٗا فَأَنۢبَتۡنَا بِهِۦ جَنَّٰتٖ وَحَبَّ ٱلۡحَصِيدِ ۝٩ وَٱلنَّخۡلَ بَاسِقَٰتٖ لَّهَا طَلۡعٞ نَّضِيدٞ ۝١٠ رِّزۡقٗا لِّلۡعِبَادِۖ وَأَحۡيَيۡنَا بِهِۦ بَلۡدَةٗ مَّيۡتٗاۚ كَذَٰلِكَ ٱلۡخُرُوجُ ﴾

"And We send down from the cloud water abounding in good, then We cause to grow thereby gardens and the grain that is reaped, And the tall palm-trees having

1. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Anbiyā' (21:22-24).
2. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah al-ʿAnkabūt (29:48-51).

spadices closely set one above another, A sustenance for the servants, and We give life thereby to a dead land; thus is the rising."[1]

﴿أَفَعَيِينَا بِٱلۡخَلۡقِ ٱلۡأَوَّلِۚ بَلۡ هُمۡ فِي لَبۡسٖ مِّنۡ خَلۡقٖ جَدِيدٖ﴾

"Were We then fatigued with the first creation? Yet are they in doubt with regard to a new creation."[2]

Also in Sūrah al-Mu'minūn:

﴿أَفَحَسِبۡتُمۡ أَنَّمَا خَلَقۡنَٰكُمۡ عَبَثٗا وَأَنَّكُمۡ إِلَيۡنَا لَا تُرۡجَعُونَ﴾

"What! did you then think that We had created you in vain and that you shall not be returned to Us?"[3]

And in Sūrah al-Jāthiyah:

﴿أَمۡ حَسِبَ ٱلَّذِينَ ٱجۡتَرَحُواْ ٱلسَّيِّـَٔاتِ أَن نَّجۡعَلَهُمۡ كَٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُواْ وَعَمِلُواْ ٱلصَّٰلِحَٰتِ سَوَآءٗ مَّحۡيَاهُمۡ وَمَمَاتُهُمۡۚ سَآءَ مَا يَحۡكُمُونَ ٢١ وَخَلَقَ ٱللَّهُ ٱلسَّمَٰوَٰتِ وَٱلۡأَرۡضَ بِٱلۡحَقِّ وَلِتُجۡزَىٰ كُلُّ نَفۡسِۭ بِمَا كَسَبَتۡ وَهُمۡ لَا يُظۡلَمُونَ﴾

"Nay! Do those who have wrought evil deeds think that We will make them like those who believe and do good-- that their life and their death shall be equal? Evil it is that they judge. And Allah created the heavens and the earth with truth and that every soul may be rewarded for what it has earned and they shall not be wronged."[4]

In fact, verses of this sort, which bring forward logical arguments in support or in negation of certain topics, are abundant within Makkan chapters.

In light to the answers presented above, it is clear that claims regarding the Qur'ān being a product of sociological circumstances, particular to a certain area or chronological period, are utterly baseless. In reality, trends noticeable in the contents of the Qur'ān, especially with respect to the differences that exist between Makkan and Madīnite chapters, are entirely attributable to the Qur'ān's excellent usage of available ground realities in conveying its eternal message to humanity. Every historical movement is initially faced with staunch opposition and must, therefore, confront this opposition to remove

1. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah Qāf (50:9-11).
2. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah Qāf (50:15).
3. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Mu'minūn (23:115).
4. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Jāthiyah (45:21-22).

all hurdles situated in the path of its success. However, once the path has been cleared, it re-focuses itself towards presenting its core ideals to the people. By doing so, it creates the much needed space and fertile ground in order to expand upon its ideology. Resultantly, it becomes able to express, with greater freedom, the entirety of what it holds hidden within itself. At this stage, alongside a general invitation towards this new creed, it begins to dwell into issues such as the explanation of doctrinal law. Based on this, we see that the trends observable within the Qur'ān, the methodology it uses to present its message and the differences that come about between Makkan and Madīnite periods, are all natural results of this logical process. In fact, any expectation to the contrary would indeed be deemed irrational.

The Sequence of Descent

With regard to the sequence of descent, we have at our disposal traditions which senior scholars and experts believe to be veracious. Most of these traditions are narrated upon the authority of ʿAbdullāh ibn ʿAbbās. Amongst them is the tradition quoted by Aḥmad ibn Abī-Yaʿqūb (deceased 292 A.H.) in his treatise on history (Ibn Abī-Yaʿqūb is popularly known as Ibn Wāḍiḥ al-Yaʿqūbī). The chain of narrators for this tradition is traced back in this order: Muḥammad ibn al-Sā'ib al-Kalbī, from Abū-Ṣāliḥ, from Ibn ʿAbbās.[1] Another such tradition is the one quoted by Muḥammad ibn Isḥāq al-Warrāq (deceased 385 A.H.) in his book entitled *al-Fahrist.*[2] (al-Warrāq is popularly known as Ibn al-Nadīm). Similarly, Shaykh al-Ṭabarsī, who is accredited with having written an exegesis upon the Holy Qur'ān, quotes his teacher Abū-Muḥammad Mahdī ibn Nizār al-Ḥusaynī al-Qā'īnī, who in turn quotes ʿAllāmah ʿAbdullāh ibn ʿAbdullāh ibn Aḥmad as having narrated one such tradition upon the authority of Ibn ʿAbbās. ʿAllāmah ʿAbdullāh (popularly known as al-Ḥākim al-Ḥasakānī al-Nayshābūrī) was a 5th century scholar and author of the book *Shawāhid al-Tanzīl*. ʿAllāmah Ṭabarsī also quotes a similar tradition from the book *al-Īḍāḥ* by Aḥmad Zāhid.[3]

Another example is the detailed tradition cited by Badr al-Dīn al-Zarkashī, the first researcher in the field of Qur'ānic studies (deceased 794 A.H.), in his book entitled *al-Burhān fi ʿUlūm al-Qur'ān* (written in the year 773 A.H.). Having cited the said tradition he remarks, "This is the sequence (of descent) for the Holy Qur'ān, supported and confirmed by numerous traditions, narrated by trustworthy men."[4]

Finally, we have Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī, a great scholar of his own epoch who

1. ***Tārīkh al-Yaʿqūbī***, vol. 2, pg. 26 & 35.
2. Ibn al-Nadīm, ***al-Fahrist***, part 3, essay 1, pg. 43-47.
3. ***Tafsīr al-Ṭabarsī***, vol. 10, pg. 405-406.
4. ***Al-Burhān***, vol. 1, pg. 193.

passed away in 911 A.H. He, in his book *al-Itqān*, quotes a tradition on this topic upon the authority of Ibn ʿAbbās. In the same book, he also cites another tradition upon the authority of Jābir Ibn Zayd.[1] This second narration further corroborates the first tradition.[2] Apart from this, he also quotes Abu'l-Ḥasan ibn Ḥassār who, in his book *al-Nāsikh wa'l-Mansūkh*, presents this issue in the shape of a short poem.

ʿAllāmah al-Ṭabarsī, along with other great scholars of this field, have pointed out that the sequence of descent of Qur'ānic chapters is determined in accordance with the chronological beginning of each chapter. This means that if the descent of a chapter starts before another chapter, but the descent of that other chapter ends before the end of the first, this "end" will be considered irrelevant. Therefore, the chapter that started first shall be deemed as having preceded the other in the over-all sequence of descent. Sūrah al-ʿAlaq, for instance, started its descent with five verses right at the beginning of the Prophet's mission, and reached its completion after a few years had passed by. Nevertheless, it is considered the first chapter to have descended [3] upon the Holy Prophet (ṣ). Sūrah al-Muzzammil and Sūrah al-Muddaththir are also similar in this respect.

The sequence of Qur'ānic chapters, according to the tradition narrated upon the authority of Ibn ʿAbbās, and corroborated by the tradition narrated by Jābir ibn Zayd, is as follows:

(The following table displays results made available after the completion of all necessary corrections. These corrections have been made after a meticulous comparison between the many manuscripts available to us today):

1. Jābir ibn Zayd was a famous jurisprudent of the city of al-Baṣrah (Basra), and was counted from amongst the chieftains of the first generation disciples. He has narrated many traditions upon the authority of Ibn ʿAbbās and ʿIkrimah. He passed away in 103 A.H. Qutādah described his death as the death of Iraq's foremost scholar.
2. ***Al-Itqān***, vol. 1, pg. 22-29.
3. Refer to: ***Tafsīr al-Ṭabarsī***, vol. 10, pg. 405.

DES.[1]	***ACT.***[2]	***NAME***
1	96	Al-ʿAlaq
2	28	Al-Qalam
3	73	Al-Muzzammil
4	74	Al-Muddaththir
5	1	Al-Fātiḥah*
6	111	Al-Masad
7	81	Al-Takwīr
8	87	Al-Aʿlā
9	92	Al-Layl
10	89	Al-Fajr
11	93	Al-Ḍuḥā
12	94	Al-Sharḥ
13	103	Al-ʿAṣr
14	100	Al-ʿĀdiyāt
15	108	Al-Kawthar
16	102	Al-Takāthur
17	107	Al-Māʿūn
18	109	Al-Kāfirūn
19	105	Al-Fīl
20	113	Al-Falaq
21	114	Al-Nās
22	112	Al-Ikhlāṣ
23	53	Al-Najm
24	80	ʿAbasa
25	97	Al-Qadr

1. Sequence of Descent.
2. Actual Sequence within the Holy Qur'ān.

26	91	Al-Shams
27	85	Al-Burūj
28	95	Al-Tīn
29	106	Quraysh
30	101	Al-Qāriʿah
31	75	Al-Qiyāmah
32	104	Al-Humazah
33	77	Al-Mursalāt
34	50	Qāf
35	90	Al-Balad
36	86	Al-Ṭāriq
37	54	Al-Qamar
38	38	Ṣād
39	7	Al-Aʿrāf
40	72	Al-Jinn
41	36	Yāsīn
42	25	Al-Furqān
43	35	Fāṭir
44	19	Maryam
45	20	Ṭā-Hā
46	56	Al-Wāqiʿah
47	26	Al-Shuʿarā'
48	27	Al-Naml
49	28	Al-Qaṣaṣ
50	17	Al-Isrā'
51	10	Yūnus
52	11	Hūd
53	12	Yūsuf
54	15	Al-Ḥijr

55	6	Al-Anʿām
56	38	Al-Ṣāffāt
57	31	Luqmān
58	34	Saba'
59	39	Al-Zumar
60	40	Ghāfir
61	41	Fuṣṣilat
62	42	Al-Shūrā
63	43	Al-Zukhruf
64	44	Al-Dukhān
65	45	Al-Jāthiyah
66	46	Al-Aḥqāf
67	51	Al-Dhāriyāt
68	88	Al-Ghāshiyah
69	18	Al-Kahf
70	16	Al-Naḥl
71	71	Nūḥ
72	14	Ibrāhīm
73	21	Al-Anbiyā'
74	23	Al-Mu'minūn
75	32	Al-Sajdah
76	52	Ṭūr
77	67	Al-Mulk
78	69	Al-Ḥāqqah
79	70	Al-Maʿārij
80	78	Al-Naba'
81	79	Al-Nāziʿāt
82	82	Al-Infiṭār
83	84	Al-Inshiqāq

84	30	Al-Rūm
85	29	Al-ʿAnkabūt
86	83	Al-Muṭaffifīn
87	2	Al-Baqarah
88	8	Al-Anfāl
89	3	Āl-ʿImrān
90	33	Al-Aḥzāb
91	60	Al-Mumtaḥanah
92	4	Al-Nisā'
93	99	Al-Zalzalah
94	57	Al-Ḥadīd
95	47	Muḥammad
96	13	Al-Raʿd
97	55	Al-Raḥmān
98	76	Al-Insān (al-Dahr)
99	65	Al-Ṭalāq
100	98	Al-Bayyinah
101	59	Al-Ḥashr
102	110	Al-Naṣr
103	24	Al-Nūr
104	22	Al-Ḥajj
105	63	Al-Munāfiqūn
106	58	Al-Mujādalah
107	49	Al-Ḥujurāt
108	66	Al-Taḥrīm
109	62	Al-Jumuʿah
110	64	Al-Taghābun
111	61	Al-Ṣaff**
112	48	Al-Fatḥ

113	5	Al-Mā'idah*
114	9	Al-Tawbah (Barā'ah)

* The tradition quoted by al-Suyūṭī upon the authority of Ibn ʿAbbās does not include Sūrah al-Fātiḥah. So, we corrected the above table according to what we found in Jābir ibn Zayd's tradition and in accordance to the text quoted in *Tārīkh al- Yaʿqūbi*.[1]

**Al-Zarkashī believes that Sūrah al-Ṣaff lies after Sūrah al-Tawbah and before Sūrah al-Jumuʿah in the sequence of descent, and similarly believes Sūrah al-Tawbah to have proceeded Sūrah al-Mā'idah thus making Sūrah al-Mā'idah the last descended chapter of the Holy Qur'ān.

Disputed Chapters

All that has been mentioned above with regard to the sequence of descent has been in accordance to the tradition narrated upon the authority of Ibn ʿAbbās. This tradition has been quoted by al-Zarkashī and al-Ṭabarsī, and its contents have been corroborated and corrected with the help of traditions narrated by Jābir ibn Zayd. However, if we look upon the issue from a more general point of view, we see that scholars have disagreed with regard to the sequence of descent of more than thirty Qur'ānic chapters. Here, we will shed some light on a few of these disputed chapters.

1. Sūrah al-Fātiḥah: Mujāhid believes this chapter to be Madīnite. However, verse 87 of Sūrah al-Ḥijr speaks of the *seven oft-repeated verses* (an indication to Sūrah al-Fātiḥah). This particular verse of Sūrah al-Ḥijr is most certainly Makkan.

﴿ وَلَقَدْ ءَاتَيْنَـٰكَ سَبْعًا مِّنَ ٱلْمَثَانِى وَٱلْقُرْءَانَ ٱلْعَظِيمَ ﴾

"And certainly We have given you seven of the oft-repeated (verses) and the grand Qur'an."[2]

Imam ʿAlī Amīr al-Mu'minīn (ʿa) says,

> "Sūrah al-Fātiḥah descended in Makkah from a treasure trove beneath the heavens."

Al-Ḥusayn ibn Faḍl[3] says, "Mujāhid has made a grave mistake in this issue,

1. ***Al-Itqān***, vol. 1, pg. 25; ***Tārīkh al-Yaʿqūbī***, vol. 2, pg. 26.
2. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Ḥijr (15:87).
3. A great scholar and exegete of his era, al-Ḥusayn ibn Faḍl is considered a leader in the academic community. He used to teach jurisprudence and the Qur'ān in a house in Nayshābūr, bought for him by Ibn Ṭāhir in 217 A.H. He attained popularity

since he has said something that goes contrary to the unanimous opinion of all scholars."[1]

2. Sūrah al-Nisā': al-Naḥḥās[2] believes that this chapter is Makkan. He bases his opinion on verse 58 of the same chapter.

﴿ إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ يَأۡمُرُكُمۡ أَن تُؤَدُّواْ ٱلۡأَمَٰنَٰتِ إِلَىٰٓ أَهۡلِهَا وَإِذَا حَكَمۡتُم بَيۡنَ ٱلنَّاسِ أَن تَحۡكُمُواْ بِٱلۡعَدۡلِۚ إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ نِعِمَّا يَعِظُكُم بِهِۦٓۗ إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ كَانَ سَمِيعَۢا بَصِيرًا ﴾

"Surely Allah commands you to make over trusts to their owners and that when you judge between people you judge with justice; surely Allah admonishes you with what is excellent; surely Allah is Seeing, Hearing."[3]

This verse was revealed in Makkah in the *Year of Victory*. However, this opinion is flawed due to two main reasons. Firstly, one verse cannot determine the nature of an entire chapter, and secondly, any chapter revealed after the Prophet's migration to al-Madīnah is deemed Madīnite.

3. Sūrah Yūnus: Some scholars have attributed Ibn ʿAbbās with an opinion according to which he considers this chapter Madīnite. However, numerous traditions narrated on Ibn ʿAbbās's authority, declaring this chapter Makkan, refute the possibility of any such attribution being true.

4. Sūrah al-Raʿd: Muḥammad ibn al-Sā'ib al-Kalbī, from amongst the classical scholars, and Sayyid Quṭb, from amongst contemporary ones, believe Sūrah al-Raʿd to be Makkan. This is because of the stern content and harsh tone employed in this chapter (facets which are characteristic of most Makkan chapters). However, traditions related to this issue unanimously declare that this chapter is Madīnite. As we have already mentioned, there exists no inherent contradiction between a chapter having a harsh tone and it being Madīnite at the same time. Examples of harsh Madīnite chapters include Sūrah al-Baqarah.

5. Sūrah al-Ḥajj: Abū-Muḥammad Makkī ibn Abī-Ṭālib considers this chapter Makkan. He bases his argument on verse 52 of the same chapter, a verse that he believes was revealed in response to the fable of the birds. This opinion is incorrect. Its inaccuracy is based on two pieces of evidence. One,

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and became a jurisconsult referred to by many people. In 282 A.H. while he was 104 years old, Ibn Faḍl passed away and his house became a shrine venerated by all.

1. ***Al-Itqān***, vol. 1, pg. 130.

2. Abū-ʿUmayr ʿĪsā ibn Muḥammad al-Naḥḥās was from amongst the great scholars and narrators of prophetic tradition in his time. He passed away in 256 A.H.

3. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Nisā' (4:58).

the fable of the birds is an unfounded artificial story with no reality to itself, and two, the contents of this chapter are incompatible with it being Makkan.

6. Sūrah al-Furqān: Only al-Ḍaḥḥāk has deemed this chapter Madīnite, a view that is contrary to the unanimous opinion of all other scholars and exegetes.

7. Sūrah Yāsīn: Some have declared this chapter Madīnite, but it is unclear who these people were or what their argument was.

8. Sūrah Ṣād: A rare opinion, the proponent of which is unknown, dictates that this chapter is Madīnite.

9. Sūrah Muḥammad: A group has deemed this chapter Makkan in contradiction of the unanimity that exists regarding it being Madīnite.

10 Sūrah al-Ḥujurāt: A group has deemed this chapter Makkan in contradiction of the unanimity that exists regarding it being Madīnite.

11. Sūrah al-Raḥmān: Sayyid Quṭb believes this chapter to be Makkan due to the tone incorporated in it, and due to a particular cadence of its verses. Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī also holds this chapter to be Makkan but bases his argument on two traditions, one narrated within al-Ḥākim's *al-Mustadrak* and the other in Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal's *al-Musnad*.

Based on a few arguments, the invalidity of this opinion becomes apparent.

Firstly, tone or rhythm alone is not proof enough for such identification.

Secondly, the tradition narrated in *al-Mustadrak* does not explicitly declare this chapter as being Makkan, while the tradition in *Musnad Aḥmad* has a weak chain of narrators.[1]

Thirdly, a vast majority of traditions related to the sequence of descent of Qur'ānic chapters deem this chapter to be Madīnite.

12. Sūrah al-Ḥadīd: Some have deemed this chapter Makkan. This is due to a narration that relates the story of ʿUmar finding a copy of this chapter in his sister's house and, subsequently, converting to Islam.[2] However, the contents of this narration are themselves debatable. Some scholars believe that the chapter found by ʿUmar was Sūrah Ṭā-Hā, while a majority of the exegetes hold that the chapter he found was Sūrah al-Ḥāqqah.[3]

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1. ***Al-Itqān***, vol. 1, pg. 33.
2. Andalusī al-, Ibn Ḥazm, ***al-Nāsikh wa'l-Mansūkh fī'l-Qur'ān*** (in the marginal notes of ***Tafsīr al-Jalālayn***), vol. 2, pg. 197.
3. Refer to Ibn Hishām, ***al-Sīrah al-Nabawiyyah***, vol. 1, pg. 370; Ibn al-Athīr, ***Usd al-Ghābah***, vol. 4, pg. 54; Ibn Ḥajar, ***al-Iṣābah***, vol. 2, pg. 519; ***Tafsīr al-Ṭabarsī***, vol. 9, pg. 237; al-Wāḥidī, ***Asbāb al-Nuzūl***, vol. 2, pg. 94.

13. Sūrah al-Ṣaff: Ibn Ḥazm, contrary to numerous traditions related to the sequence of descent of Qur'ānic chapters and the belief held by a majority of scholars, understands this chapter to be Makkan.

14. Sūrah al-Jumuʿah: One opinion proposes that this chapter is Makkan. However, the proponent is unknown and the opinion itself is contrary to available traditions as well as the majority view held by Qur'ānic exegetes.

15. Sūrah al-Taghābun: Some have said that Ibn ʿAbbās believed this chapter to be Makkan. This opinion is, nevertheless, contrary to numerous traditions narrated upon his authority wherein he deems this chapter to be Madīnite.

16. Sūrah al-Mulk: Contrary to the unanimous opinion held by scholars, some have deemed this chapter to be Madīnite.

17. Sūrah al-Insān: ʿAbdullāh ibn Zubayr and others who reject the virtues of the Ahl al-Bayt (ʿa) have held this chapter to be Makkan. In this manner, they have sought to make dubious the fact that this chapter descended in praise of the Ahl al-Bayt (ʿa) when they fed the poor and the orphaned for several continuous days, ignoring their own hunger and thirst. Sayyid Quṭb, based on the overall flow of the chapter, believes it to be Makkan. Al-Ḥāfiẓ al-Ḥasakānī says, "Some enemies of the Ahl al-Bayt (ʿa) have claimed that the unanimous opinion held by exegetes, with regard to this chapter, is that it is Makkan. Their claim is designed to justify their rejection of the Ahl al-Bayt's virtues. This claim is baseless, since the scholars are in consensus with regard to this chapter being Madīnite."[1]

ʿAllāmah al-Ṭabarsī has conducted a most refined research that proves this chapter to be Madīnite.[2] The greatest of evidences, available to us in reference to this matter, are the traditions narrated by the earliest sources wherein, such a consensus is clear.

18. Sūrah al-Muṭaffifīn: Al-Yaʿqūbī believes this to be the first Madīnite chapter, while some other scholars hold that its descent took place between Makkah and al-Madīnah. However, traditions related to the sequence of descent clearly show that this chapter was the first Madīnite chapter to be revealed.

18. Sūrah al-Aʿlā: Some have claimed this chapter to be Madīnite due to the following verse which apparently speaks of the ʿĪd congregational prayers:

1. Al-Ḥasakānī, ***Shawāhid al-Tanzīl***, pg. 310-315.
2. ***Tafsīr al-Ṭabarsī***, vol. 10, pg. 405.

﴿ قَدۡ أَفۡلَحَ مَن تَزَكَّىٰ ١٤ وَذَكَرَ ٱسۡمَ رَبِّهِۦ فَصَلَّىٰ ١٥ ﴾

"He indeed shall be successful who purifies himself, And magnifies the name of his Lord and prays."[1]

However, the contents of this verse are general and, thus, there exists no contradiction between them being Makkan and the meanings they convey.

19. Sūrah al-Layl: Some are of the opinion that this chapter is Madīnite, basing their views on a few traditions that speak of the circumstances surrounding its descent.[2]

20. Sūrah al-Qadr: Some have deemed this chapter to be Madīnite. In traditions related to the circumstances surrounding its descent, it is narrated that the Prophet (ṣ) saw a dream wherein he witnessed monkeys climbing onto his pulpit.[3] Proponents of the said view argue that because the Prophet (ṣ) did not have a pulpit during his time in Makkah, these traditions must be indicative of a time after his migration to al-Madīnah. This argument is baseless since dreaming about a pulpit does not, in any way, necessitate the existence of one.

21. Sūrah al-Bayyinah: In opposition to the consensus existing with regard to this chapter, Makkī ibn Abī-Ṭālib believes it to be Makkan.[4]

22. Sūrah al-Zalzalah: Due to its harsh tone, some have claimed it to be Makkan. However, we have numerous traditions indicating that this chapter is indeed Madīnite.

23. Sūrah al-ʿĀdiyāt: Qutādah holds this chapter to be Madīnite basing his argument on a weak tradition that cannot be relied upon.[5]

24. Sūrah al-Takāthur: Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī believes this chapter to be Madīnite, basing his opinion on the circumstances surrounding its descent which, he believes, are related to the Jews of al-Madīnah.[6] However, neither the contents of the chapter, nor any tradition specify this chapter as being related to the Jews of al-Madīnah.

25. Sūrah al-Māʿūn: Al-Ḍaḥḥāk holds this chapter to be Madīnite. However,

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1. The Holy Qurʾān, Sūrah al-Aʿlā (87:14-15).
2. Refer to ***Al-Durr al-Manthūr***, vol. 6, pg. 357; ***Tafsīr al-Ṭabarsī***, vol. 10, pg. 501.
3. Refer to ***Al-Mustadrak***, vol. 3, pg. 171.
4. Abū-Muḥammad Makkī ibn Abī-Ṭālib, ***Al-Kashf ʿan Wujūh al-Qirā'āt al-Sabʿah***, vol. 2, pg. 386.
5. Refer to ***Al-Durr al-Manthūr***, vol. 6, pg. 383; ***Tafsīr al-Ṭabarsī***, vol. 10, pg. 527; ***Jāmiʿ Al-BayānTafsīr al-Ṭabarī***, vol. 30, pg. 177.
6. ***Al-Itqān***, vol. 1, pg. 14.

traditions related to the sequence of descent indicate quite the opposite.

26. Sūrah al-Kawthar: A group claims that this chapter descended upon the Prophet (ṣ) in al-Madīnah, during his sleep.[1] This is incorrect, because never was a verse or chapter revealed unto the Holy Prophet (ṣ) in his sleep, although verses or chapters already revealed were sometimes repeated for the Prophet (ṣ) during his slumber.

27. Sūrah al-Ikhlāṣ (or al-Tawḥīd): Al-Suyūṭī prefers that this chapter be considered Madīnite.[2] However, the tradition that he cites, in corroboration of his preference, is not proven to be correct.

29-30. Al-Muʿawwidhatayn (the two evil-repelling chapters; namely, Sūrah al-Falaq and Sūrah al-Nās): Al-Yaʿqūbī holds these two chapters to be from amongst the very last chapters revealed to the Holy Prophet (ṣ) in al-Madīnah.[3] However, numerous traditions prove the contrary to be true.

Exceptional Verses

In the works of some classical scholars we find the following opinion:

Some chapters of the Holy Qur'ān are such that they contain exceptional verses. This means that a chapter, in itself, may be Makkan, while a few of its verses may be Madīnite, or vice-versa.

However, our research proved quite the opposite to be true. All verses of Makkan chapters were, in fact, Makkan and the same was true for Madīnite chapters.[4] For the sake of brevity, we shall mention only a few examples of this phenomenon herein.

Example 1:

﴿ حُرِّمَتْ عَلَيْكُمُ ٱلْمَيْتَةُ وَٱلدَّمُ وَلَحْمُ ٱلْخِنزِيرِ وَمَآ أُهِلَّ لِغَيْرِ ٱللَّهِ بِهِۦ وَٱلْمُنْخَنِقَةُ وَٱلْمَوْقُوذَةُ وَٱلْمُتَرَدِّيَةُ وَٱلنَّطِيحَةُ وَمَآ أَكَلَ ٱلسَّبُعُ إِلَّا مَا ذَكَّيْتُمْ وَمَا ذُبِحَ عَلَى ٱلنُّصُبِ وَأَن تَسْتَقْسِمُواْ بِٱلْأَزْلَٰمِ ۚ ذَٰلِكُمْ فِسْقٌ ۗ ٱلْيَوْمَ يَئِسَ ٱلَّذِينَ كَفَرُواْ مِن دِينِكُمْ فَلَا تَخْشَوْهُمْ وَٱخْشَوْنِ ۚ ٱلْيَوْمَ أَكْمَلْتُ لَكُمْ دِينَكُمْ وَأَتْمَمْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ نِعْمَتِى وَرَضِيتُ لَكُمُ ٱلْإِسْلَٰمَ دِينًا ۚ فَمَنِ ٱضْطُرَّ فِى مَخْمَصَةٍ غَيْرَ مُتَجَانِفٍ لِّإِثْمٍ ۙ فَإِنَّ ٱللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ ﴾

1. ***Tafsīr al-Ṭabarsī***, vol. 10, pg. 548.
2. Al-Suyūṭī, ***Lubāb al-Nuqūl***, vol. 2, pg. 147; ***al-Itqān***, vol. 1, pg. 14.
3. ***Tārīkh-e-Yaʿqūbī***, vol. 2, pg. 35.
4. Refer to: ***al-Tamhīd***, vol. 1, pg. 169-237.

"Forbidden to you is that which dies of itself, and blood, and flesh of swine, and that on which any other name than that of Allah has been invoked, and the strangled (animal) and that beaten to death, and that killed by a fall and that killed by being smitten with the horn, and that which wild beasts have eaten, except what you slaughter, and what is sacrificed on stones set up (for idols) and that you divide by the arrows; that is a transgression. This day have those who disbelieve despaired of your religion, so fear them not, and fear Me. This day have I perfected for you your religion and completed My favor on you and chosen for you Islam as a religion; but whoever is compelled by hunger, not inclining willfully to sin, then surely Allah is Forgiving, Merciful."[1]

It is said that the revelation of this verse took place on Mount ʿArafāt[2] and, therefore, this verse stands to be Makkan, whereas the chapter is Madīnite. This confusion stems from the fact that the proponents of this view have based their judgment on the criterion of location mentioned earlier in this book. They have claimed this verse to be Makkan since its revelation took place in an area surrounding the city of Makkah, even though, chronologically, its descent happened after the Prophet's migration to al-Madīnah. However, the correct criterion is indeed the criterion of time that divides chapters up into those revealed before that migration and those revealed after it.

Example 2:

﴿ مَا كَانَ لِلنَّبِيِّ وَٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوٓاْ أَن يَسْتَغْفِرُواْ لِلْمُشْرِكِينَ وَلَوْ كَانُوٓاْ أُوْلِى قُرْبَىٰ مِنۢ بَعْدِ مَا تَبَيَّنَ لَهُمْ أَنَّهُمْ أَصْحَٰبُ ٱلْجَحِيمِ ﴿١١٣﴾ وَمَا كَانَ ٱسْتِغْفَارُ إِبْرَٰهِيمَ لأَبِيهِ إِلَّا عَن مَّوْعِدَةٍ وَعَدَهَآ إِيَّاهُ فَلَمَّا تَبَيَّنَ لَهُۥٓ أَنَّهُۥ عَدُوٌّ لِّلَّهِ تَبَرَّأَ مِنْهُ ۚ إِنَّ إِبْرَٰهِيمَ لأَوَّٰهٌ حَلِيمٌ ﴿١١٤﴾ ﴾

"It is not (fit) for the Prophet and those who believe that they should ask forgiveness for the polytheists, even though they should be near relatives, after it has become clear to them that they are inmates of the flaming fire. And Ibrāhīm asking forgiveness for his sire was only owing to a promise which he had made to him; but when it became clear to him that he was an enemy of Allah, he declared himself to be clear of him; most surely Ibrāhīm was very tender-hearted forbearing."[3]

It is claimed that the revelation of these verses took place during the death of

1. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Mā'idah (5:3).
2. ***Tārīkh al-Qur'ān***, pg. 27.
3. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Tawbah (9:113-114).

Abū-Ṭālib (ʿa), when the Prophet (ṣ) promised him that he would pray to God for his forgiveness and salvation.[1] Al-Ṭabarsī, in his exegesis upon the Holy Qur'ān, narrates that the revelation of these verses took place after the victory at Makkah, when some of the companions asked the Prophet's permission to pray for the salvation of their polytheist fathers, an act that God strictly forbade.[2]

Example 3:

It is said that the first three verses of Sūrah Yūsuf are Madīnite. Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī does not accept this opinion. However, to our bewilderment, a person of the academic standing of Abū-ʿAbdullāh al-Zanjānī has adhered to this view.[3] When arguing in favor of this opinion, it has been said that the descent of these verses took place when the companions asked the Jews of al-Madīnah to question the Prophet (ṣ) about Prophet Joseph. This argument is seriously lacking in strength. If the rest of the chapter was revealed in Makkah, why would its introduction be revealed in al-Madīnah? However, the opposite of this story may actually have taken place. It is possible that the Jews of al-Madīnah may have asked the polytheists of Makkah to question the Holy Prophet (ṣ) about Prophet Joseph and, as a result of this inquiry, God may have revealed this Qur'ānic chapter.

Reasons Surrounding the Descent of Qur'ānic Chapters

As we already know, the descent of the Holy Qur'ān was not instantaneous but a process that took place continually and over an extended period of time. Verses, and even entire chapters, would be revealed in accordance with the circumstances surrounding the Prophet (ṣ) and the Muslim community at a particular place and time. Therefore, if the meanings of a verse become vague, the importance of these circumstances in deciphering the exact purpose of divine speech becomes evident. These contextual circumstances are of utmost importance to anyone seeking a correct comprehension of Qur'ānic text. This is because they comprise essential evidence, without which textual indications within the Qur'ān's verses would remain incomplete. Let's look at the following verse as an example of this phenomenon:

1. ***Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī***, vol. 2, pg. 119 &, vol. 6, pg. 87.
2. ***Tafsīr al-Ṭabarsī***, vol. 5, pg. 76.
3. Refer to: ***al-Itqān***, vol. 1, pg. 15; ***Tārīkh al-Qur'ān***, pg. 28.

﴿ إِنَّ ٱلصَّفَا وَٱلۡمَرۡوَةَ مِن شَعَآئِرِ ٱللَّهِۖ فَمَنۡ حَجَّ ٱلۡبَيۡتَ أَوِ ٱعۡتَمَرَ فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيۡهِ أَن يَطَّوَّفَ بِهِمَاۚ وَمَن تَطَوَّعَ خَيۡرٗا فَإِنَّ ٱللَّهَ شَاكِرٌ عَلِيمٌ ﴾

"Surely the Safa and the Marwa are among the signs appointed by Allah; so whoever makes a pilgrimage to the House or pays a visit (to it), there is no blame on him if he goes round them both; and whoever does good spontaneously, then surely Allah is Grateful, Knowing."[1]

An objection is raised, with reference to this verse, as to why God used the phrase *"there is no blame..."* to indicate the ruling for an act that is obligatory upon anyone performing the Ḥajj or ʿUmrah pilgrimages (i.e. running between the two hills of al-Ṣafā and al-Marwah). They argue that this phrase indicates mere acceptability and not obligation. However, when we refer to contextual evidence related to the circumstances surrounding the descent of this verse, we see that its purpose was to clarify a misconception held by people with regard to this particular act. The whole story is as such:

> After the treaty of al-Ḥudaybiyah in 6 A.H. it was agreed that the Prophet (ṣ) and his companions may enter Makkah to perform the ʿUmrah pilgrimage. It was also agreed that for a period of three days the polytheists would remove their idols from around the Holy Kaʿbah and from the hills of al-Ṣafā and al-Marwah, so that the Muslims may be able to perform their rituals with ease. After the completion of these three days, the idols were placed back in their original positions. Some Muslims had not yet performed the ritual of running between the two said hills. With the idols back up again, they thought that the performance of this ritual might not be considered permissible anymore, or might even be deemed a sin. Having questioned the Prophet (ṣ) about this matter, the said verse of the Holy Qur'ān was revealed as an answer to their query. The verse indicated that their assumptions were unfounded and that God would still accept their ritual act of worship, even though the idols had been put back again.[2]

Thus, the intention of this verse was not to present a legal ruling. It was merely revealed to remove an allusion of sinfulness that certain people had developed in their minds with regard to the said ritual. Herein, we are able to appreciate the essential role played by these contextual evidences in ascertaining the correct meanings of a given verse.[3]

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1. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Baqarah (2:158).
2. ***Tafsīr al-ʿAyyāshī***, vol. 1, pg. 70.
3. ***al-Tamhīd***, vol. 1, pg. 243

Identification of the contextual environment in which a chapter came to be revealed is very difficult. This is because the earliest sources have recorded very little with reference to this issue. Scholars in that era were themselves aware of the situational background surrounding the descent of each Qur'ānic chapter and, therefore, it is possible that they saw little or no need to record what they deemed as 'obvious'.

Later on, traditions and narration came to be recorded, but all of them were weak in authenticity and normally politically motivated. This kind of purposeful falsification, carried out with devious political intentions, was especially common during the dark reign of the Umayyad regime. At that time, numerous traditions were concocted to interpret the Qur'ān in accordance to what best suited the ruling cabal. Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal says, "Three things are devoid of foundation. One, traditions related to the early battles in Islamic history, two, traditions related to the events of the Last Age, and three, traditions related to the exegesis of the Holy Qur'ān." Badr al-Dīn al-Zarkashī quotes some researchers as having said, "Most traditions regarding this issue are unreliable in nature, but this does not mean that all such traditions are useless."[1]

The most famous scholar to have collected traditions related to this issue is Abū'l-Ḥasan ʿAlī ibn Aḥmad al-Wāḥidī al-Nayshābūrī (deceased 468 A.H.). About him, Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī (deceased 911 A.H.) says, "He has indeed put in a lot of effort in collecting weak traditions, and, in doing so, has effectively mixed the correct with the dubious. Most of the traditions collected by him are narrated from al-Kalbī, who in turn narrates from Abū-Ṣāliḥ, who narrates on the authority of Ibn ʿAbbās. This chain of narrations is deemed very weak in authenticity...."[2]

Subsequently, Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī ends up writing a treatise on the same issue called *Lubāb al-Nuqūl* (Selected Narrations) wherein he himself falls prey to quoting weak traditions. One example is this following verse:

﴿ وَإِنۡ عَاقَبۡتُمۡ فَعَاقِبُواْ بِمِثۡلِ مَا عُوقِبۡتُم بِهِۦۖ وَلَئِن صَبَرۡتُمۡ لَهُوَ خَيۡرٞ لِّلصَّٰبِرِينَ ١٢٦ وَٱصۡبِرۡ وَمَا صَبۡرُكَ إِلَّا بِٱللَّهِۚ وَلَا تَحۡزَنۡ عَلَيۡهِمۡ وَلَا تَكُ فِي ضَيۡقٖ مِّمَّا يَمۡكُرُونَ ١٢٧ إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ مَعَ ٱلَّذِينَ ٱتَّقَواْ وَّٱلَّذِينَ هُم مُّحۡسِنُونَ ١٢٨ ﴾

"And if you take your turn, then retaliate with the like of that with which you were afflicted; but if you are patient, it will certainly be best for those who are patient.

1. ***Al-Burhān***, vol. 2, pg. 156.
2. Refer to: ***Lubāb al-Nuqūl***, vol. 1, pg. 11.

And be patient and your patience is not but by (the assistance of) Allah, and grieve not for them, and do not distress yourself at what they plan. Surely Allah is with those who guard (against evil) and those who do good (to others)."1

Al-Suyūṭī says that it was revealed when the Holy Prophet (ṣ) stood beside the mutilated body of his uncle Ḥamzah after the Battle of Uḥud and, having seen his terrible state, remarked, "I shall do to seventy of them what they have done to you." (I shall cut off the ears, noses and cut open the stomachs of seventy from amongst the Makkan polytheists). Here, the Archangel Jibrā'īl came done unto him, carrying this verse forbidding him from committing any such act.[2] Al-Suyūṭī cites this tradition, forgetting that the battle of Uḥud took place in the fourth year after the Prophet's migration to al-Madīnah, whereas Sūrah al-Naḥl was revealed during the Makkan period of the Prophet's mission, years before the said event had taken place. Apart from this, it is impossible that a person of impeccable morality and justice, whose personality personified Islam itself, could ever have considered committing such a barbaric act. In reality, this chapter was revealed during the Makkan period of the Prophet's mission, while Muslims were facing severe persecution at the hands of the Makkan polytheists. In this particular backdrop, the verse seeks to advice the then fledgling Muslim community to remain steadfast in its patience.[3]

Reasons Surrounding the Descent of Qur'ānic Chapters or the Context of the Descent of Qur'ānic Chapters

What is the difference between reasons of descent (*asbāb al-nuzūl*) and context of descent (*sha'n al-nuzūl*)? Most exegetes see no great difference between these two terms, and have used both pieces of jargon, interchangeably, to signify all circumstances that surrounded the descent of a particular chapter. However, these two concepts are definitely different from one another. The parameter of issues covered by the "context of descent" is much greater than those covered by the "reasons of descent." The "context of descent" covers everything related to the descent of a verse, or verses, regardless of whether it be a person, a movement or an incident, or whether it be in the past, the present or the future. As a result, this term takes onto itself a very general disposition e.g. it may be said that the "context of descent" of a particular verse relates to the issue of angelic or prophetic infallibility, or it may relate to the immaculacy of a particular prophet like Abraham, Noah, and Adam. On the contrary, the "reason of descent" is always something specific that immediately precedes the revelation of a

1. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Naḥl (16:126-128).
2. ***Lubāb al-Nuqūl***, vol. 1, pg. 213.
3. Refer to: ***al-Tamhīd***, vol. 1, pg. 247-253.

verse, and, in effect, causes this revelation to take place. In other words, the descent of this given verse happens in response to this particular occurrence. Therefore, we see that the "reason of descent" is something much more specific and particular than the "context of descent."

Denotative Meaning (tanzīl) and Connotative Meaning (ta'wīl)

In the terminology used by the early scholars, the word *tanzīl* signified the denotative meanings of a given piece of revelation in relation to its actual historical background, whereas *ta'wīl* signified its connotative meanings, the latter being applicable to all events and issues similar to the one actually existing when the verse was originally revealed. Others have used the words *ẓahr*, apparent meaning, and *baṭn*, inner meaning, while referring to the same concepts. It has been narrated that al-Fuḍayl ibn Yasār questioned Imam al-Ṣādiq (ʿa) about a tradition of the Holy Prophet (ṣ), wherein the Blessed Apostle of God (ṣ) is quoted to have said:

مَا فِي الْقُرْآنِ آيَةٌ إِلاَّ وَلَهَا ظَهْرٌ وَبَطْنٌ

"There is no verse in the Qur'ān except that there exists for it a manifest meaning and an inner one."

In response to this, the Imam (ʿa) replied,

> "*Ẓahr* is the apparent and manifest meaning and context of a verse, whereas *Baṭn* is the inner and more general meaning and context pertaining to the same. The latter is applicable to all scenarios similar to the circumstances existing in the first. These scenarios include those that existed in the past and those that shall come about in the future. The Qur'ān is like the sun and the moon, it is always in motion (i.e. the Qur'ān is not a static book with a singular context, inapplicable to other circumstances, but rather it is universal in nature and applies to all times)."[1]

In another tradition we find the Holy Imam (ʿa) saying:

> *Ẓahr* relates to the individuals about whom the verse was originally revealed, and *Baṭn* is related to all people similar to the first group in character.[2]

The Usage of the "Context of Descent," Tanzīl and Ta'wīl in Jurisprudence

Jurisprudents and Muslim scholars have constructed a rule, derived from

1. Al-Ṣaffār, ***Baṣā'ir al-Darajāt,*** pg. 196, Ḥadīth. 7.
2. ***Tafsīr al-ʿAyyāshī***, vol. 1, pg. 196. Ḥadīth. 4.

discussions related to the context and various meanings of Qur'ānic verses. This rule is used in the juridical derivation of religious laws from divine texts. It reads: "Validity and significance belong to the general meanings conveyed by a given word, and not to the specific instance of its usage." According to this precept, a talented jurist must set aside the specific context of a verse, and instead, must adhere to the general meanings conveyed by the given text. However, this does not mean that the jurist must completely ignore all denotative indications present in a given verse. In fact, without these critical indications, the jurist would find himself devoid of a complete comprehension of the said text. Nevertheless, this rule dictates that the meanings of verses are not limited to the specific cases for which they were originally revealed. This general applicability is because of the inherent universality of divine law. Here we shall present for the reader two examples pertaining to the correct usage of this rule within Qur'ānic verses.

Example 1:

﴿ وَلِلَّهِ ٱلۡمَشۡرِقُ وَٱلۡمَغۡرِبُۚ فَأَيۡنَمَا تُوَلُّواْ فَثَمَّ وَجۡهُ ٱللَّهِۚ إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ وَٰسِعٌ عَلِيمٞ ﴾

"And Allah's is the East and the West, therefore, whither you turn, thither is Allah's purpose; surely Allah is Ample-giving, Knowing."[1]

This verse, like many others in the Holy Qur'ān, has for itself an apparent meaning as well as an inner aspect. The Immaculate Imams have informed us about this inner, and more general, aspect. The apparent meaning of this verse seems to negate the obligatory nature of praying while facing towards the Holy Kaʿbah. However, the apparent contradiction between this and other verses is resolved when we take into account the "context of descent." This context is as follows:

The Jews used to object to the way the Muslims prayed. They claimed that if praying towards Bayt al-Maqdis (the temple mount) in Jerusalem was correct, then subsequent prayers offered by the Muslim community, in which they faced the Kaʿbah, are to be considered invalid; and if their current prayers are valid then their previous worship facing Jerusalem must definitely be deemed incorrect. God answers the Jews in this verse by declaring both acts of worship valid. He states that worship itself bears primary importance, whereas facing the Kaʿbah or Jerusalem represent subsidiary matters. Where ever you face, God is there. Thus, facing the east, because the Kaʿbah exists east of al-Madīnah, and facing the west, because Jerusalem lies west to it, are both by command of God and both represent

1. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Baqarah (2:115).

manifestations of His all-pervasive presence. God himself, however, does not exist in a specific geographic location. "Indeed God is All-pervading, All-knowing."[1]

In a tradition, this verse has also been used in another manner. This tradition derives a religious edict from within this verse and concludes that non-obligatory prayers may be performed in the state of movement in whatever direction the traveler may be facing.[2] This is a meaning derived from the inner reality of the verse in question and is made available to us by the immaculate Imams.

Example 2:

﴿ وَأَنَّ ٱلْمَسَٰجِدَ لِلَّهِ فَلَا تَدْعُواْ مَعَ ٱللَّهِ أَحَدًا ﴾

"And that the mosques are Allah's, therefore call not upon any one with Allah:"[3]

The Arabic word *masājid* is the plural form of *masjid* which literally means a place of prostration and worship. If this verse were to be translated, while incorporating this meaning of the given word, the result would be thus: "Places of worship belong to God and do not call upon anyone except Him." However, if we take the word *masājid* as the plural number of the infinitive noun *masjid* meaning "worship," then the verse would be translated as such, "Worship belongs only to God and do not worship anyone apart from Him." No matter which option is chosen, both meanings prohibit polytheistic worship. However, we have at our disposal traditions wherein the first meaning is used to come to a novel conclusion. These traditions report that by "places of prostration" God also means "everything used in order to prostrate" i.e. the seven bodily parts that touch the ground during ritual prostration. Exegetes, such as Saʿīd ibn Jubayr, al-Zajjāj and al-Farrā', have all said, "The word *masājid* includes the seven bodily parts used during prostration. These body parts are from God and he has gifted them to humanity. Thus, they are not to be used in service to anyone apart from Him.[4]

Imam Muḥammad al-Taqī (ʿa) provided a similar interpretation of this verse's inner and expansive meaning. It is reported that a case was referred to the court of the Abbasid ruler al-Muʿtaṣim Billāh, where the prisoner's

1. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Baqarah (2:115).
2. Al-Ḥurr al-ʿĀmilī, ***Wasā'il al-Shīʿah***, vol. 3, Chapters regarding the direction of prayer, Chapter 8 & 15.
3. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Jinn (72:18).
4. Refer to: ***Tafsīr al-Ṭabarsī***, vol. 10, pg. 372.

hands were to be cut off as punishment for theft. All those present in the court aired their respective opinions about what qualified as a correct penalty for the said culprit. Then the Imam (ʿa) said,

> "(His hands are to be cut off) from the roots of the fingers only."

When asked for evidence in support of his verdict, he replied,

> "Palms are from amongst the seven organs used in prostration, and these organs belong exclusively to God. Thus, they must not be cut off."[1]

The penalty of a thief must be extracted from something that he himself owns.

Ways of Determining the "Reasons of Descent"

"Reasons of descent" are only determinable with the help of narrated traditions. Unfortunately, events and accidents during the relevant era were seldom recorded. The few records that have reached us are either of dubious authenticity or contradictory to one another and, thus, can seldom be relied upon. Al-Wāḥidī, in his book *Asbāb al-Nuzūl,* says, "It is not justified for us to comment upon the reasons of descent, except if we have at our disposal authentic traditions narrated by people who had first hand information of the events in question. Not traditions of vague veracity narrated by individuals not present during the actual incident."

He then goes on to quote Ibn ʿAbbās wherein he narrates a tradition of the Holy Prophet (ṣ) which says, "Stay away from narrating traditions unless you have certain and absolute knowledge of their authenticity, for if anyone attributes a lie to me or to the Qur'ān, then his place is surely in hellfire."

This is why the pious people of the earliest era would always refrain from speaking about the Qur'ān. Muḥammad ibn Sīrīn says, "I asked ʿUbaydah, one of the famous first generation disciples, about the exegesis of a certain verse of the Holy Qur'ān. He replied, 'Those who understood the descent of the Holy Qur'ān have all gone (indicating that those who had knowledge of the reasons of descent were no longer alive)."

Al-Wāḥidī adds, "In our times there existed numerous people who had taken on the task of lying with regard to this topic. Thus, utmost care must be taken to reach the truth in relation to the Holy Qur'ān."[2]

We have already mentioned the words of Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal with regard to this issue. Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī, with all his academic prowess and acumen

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1. Al-Ḥurr al-ʿĀmilī, ***Wasā'il al-Shīʿah***, vol. 18, Chapters regarding the punishment of theft, Chapter 4.
2. ***Asbāb al-Nuzūl***, pg. 4.

in this field, was not able to collect more than 250 traditions related to this topic. Even the ones he collected are merely a mixture of authentic and dubious narrations.[1] However, in the school of the Ahl al-Bayt we find no shortage of authentic traditions. In total over 4000 traditions, all with rock solid credentials, are available to us from the Ahl al-Bayt (ʿa) so that we may be able to correctly understand the divine message of God.[2]

Sources available to Muslims in general, dealing with traditions that speak of the reasons of descent, include al-Ṭabarī's *Jāmiʿ al-Bayān*, al-Suyūṭī's *al-Durr al-Manthūr*, al-Ṭabarsī's *Majmaʿ al-Bayān* and Shaykh al-Ṭūsī's *al-Tibyān*. Apart from the said works, specialized texts dealing specifically with this field of study are also available. These include al-Wāḥidī's *Asbāb al-Nuzūl* and al-Suyūṭī's *Lubāb al-Nuqūl*. However, in all of the mentioned works, we find authentic and dubious narrations included without due care. Thus, it is necessary to look at these works from a research point of view. The identification of authentic and dubious traditions, in case of contradictory statements, is possible if we follow one of the following methods.

1. The chain of narrators must be authentic, especially the last individual in a given chain, who is, in fact, the principle narrator of a tradition, must be a reliable personality. He must either be one of the immaculate Imams or a trustworthy companion. From amongst the companions, he must be someone like ʿAbdullāh ibn Masʿūd, Ubayy ibn Kaʿb or Ibn ʿAbbās. He must be someone well known for having pioneered the study of Qur'ānic sciences, a person unanimously accepted as reliable by the Islamic nation. From amongst the first generation disciples, only a person held in high esteem like Mujāhid, Saʿīd ibn Jubayr or Saʿīd ibn al-Musayyab would qualify as an authentic narrator i.e. an individual of unquestionable integrity, whose veracity is well-known.

2. Plurality of unbroken chains of transmission, technically called *tawātur* or *istifāḍah,* must exist for the tradition in question. Herein, an absolute textual unity amongst all the instances of the said tradition is not necessary. It suffices if all the numerous instances convey a uniform concept. However, if the concepts differ from each other, it is necessary that there exist a possibility of reconciliation between them. Only in this state can one attain surety about the veracity of the said narration. From amongst the examples of such cases are traditions dealing with the change of the qiblah (the direction of prayer). They explain the reasons of descent related to verses

1. Refer to: ***al-Itqān***, vol. 4, pg. 214-257.
2. These traditions have been collected into one place through the commendable efforts of Agha Burhān and are ready for publication.

revealed with regard to this issue.

3. The said tradition must completely remove all ambiguity and doubt about the meanings of the verse or chapter in question. This, in itself, can be deemed evidence of the veracity of a narration, even if the said tradition does not fulfill the strict criteria defined in the science of Ḥadīth. In the study of history, this principle has widespread usage. We often compare a given account of events with other recorded accounts, found in the same historic vicinity, and deem it to be correct simply because it fits flawlessly into the overall pattern of occurrences. In doing so, we disregard whether the account itself, or the sources responsible for its narration, have airtight credentials or not. One such example is this verse of Sūrah al-Tawbah:

﴿إِنَّمَا ٱلنَّسِيٓءُ زِيَادَةٌ فِي ٱلۡكُفۡرِۖ يُضَلُّ بِهِ ٱلَّذِينَ كَفَرُواْ يُحِلُّونَهُۥ عَامٗا وَيُحَرِّمُونَهُۥ عَامٗا لِّيُوَاطِـُٔواْ عِدَّةَ مَا حَرَّمَ ٱللَّهُ فَيُحِلُّواْ مَا حَرَّمَ ٱللَّهُۚ زُيِّنَ لَهُمۡ سُوٓءُ أَعۡمَٰلِهِمۡۗ وَٱللَّهُ لَا يَهۡدِي ٱلۡقَوۡمَ ٱلۡكَٰفِرِينَ ٣٧﴾

"Postponing (of the sacred month) is only an addition in unbelief, wherewith those who disbelieve are led astray, violating it one year and keeping it sacred another, that they may agree in the number (of months) that Allah has made sacred, and thus violate what Allah has made sacred; the evil of their doings is made fair-seeming to them; and Allah does not guide the unbelieving people."[1]

War was prohibited in the sacred months. The reason behind this prohibition was to ensure security of passage for all Arabs, travelling from all points of the vast Arabian Peninsula, in order to come to Makkah for performing the Ḥajj pilgrimage. Therefore, war and hostilities were disallowed during the months of Dhu'l-Qaʿdah, Dhu'l-Ḥijjah and Muḥarram. Similarly, during the month of Rajab, to facilitate Arabs travelling to Makkah for performing the ʿUmrah pilgrimage, the tribes were obliged to observe a complete cease-fire. However, the elite of these powerful tribes would habitually transgress upon these boundaries. If a certain tribe sensed victory in battle and, simultaneously, one of the sacred months was about to start, its chieftains would simply declare that they had replaced the said month with another e.g. they would replace Shaʿbān with Rajab and say that this year Rajab shall begin after the month of Shaʿbān. Thus, they would rationalize their act of transgression. In 9 A.H. this act came to be forbidden.[2] The traditions dealing with the reasons of descent of this particular verse correlate perfectly

1. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Tawbah (9:37).
2. Refer to: ***Tafsīr al-Ṭabarsī***, vol. 5, pg. 29.

with all other pieces of the puzzle available to us with regard to this text. These narrations fit in well with the contents of this verse, its overall position in the chapter and all other contextual elements, thereby making the verse's meaning clear and devoid of vagueness. Therefore, we accept these narrations as true, even though they might fail to meet the staunch standards of authenticity prescribed by the science of Ḥadīth. This principle is applicable to other instances as well.

Presence of the Narrator

For us to accept a tradition related to the "reasons of descent," is it necessary that the narrator also be an eye witness of the event he seeks to narrate? A majority of scholars answer in the affirmative. They believe it to be critical that the first narrator, in the said chain of narrators, have first hand information of the event he narrates. In this way, the chain, figuratively, remains attached to the occurrence itself. Al-Wāḥidī says, "Narrations dealing with the 'reasons of descent' are unacceptable unless they be transmitted by someone who, with his own eyes and ears, has observed the actual event, knows of the reasons in question and speaks from the point of view of certainty."[1]

However, some other scholars do not see this to be a necessary pre-requisite and hold that a narrator's certainty about the information he transmits is enough, regardless of whether he observed the said situation personally or not. Al-Ḥākim al-Nayshābūrī, in the book *ʿIlm al-Ḥadīth*, writes, "If a companion of the Holy Prophet (ṣ), having been present in the era of divine revelation, speaks of a certain verse's 'reasons of descent', his speech shall be considered at par with the speech of the Prophet (ṣ) himself i.e. this narration would be considered equivalent to an authentic Prophetic tradition."[2]

This opinion is apparently more acceptable than the first. If the credibility, intellectual credence, justice, impeccability and truthfulness of a certain source be established beyond reasonable doubt, it is no longer necessary for that source to have observed personally everything that he narrates and reports. Our trust in the said source, developed through careful analysis of his character and record, is enough for us to accept all reports made available by him. It is according to this very principle that we deem as true all narrations about the Holy Qur'ān made available to us by the immaculate Imams.

The Names and Traits of the Qur'ānic Chapters

1. ***Asbāb al-Nuzūl***, vol. 4.
2. ***Al-Mustadrak***, vol. 2, pg. 257 & 263; ***Maʿrifat ʿUlūm al-Ḥadīth***, pg. 10-20.

Jamāl al-Dīn Abu'l-Futūḥ al-Rāzī (a great exegete who lived during the 6th century A.H.) mentions 43 names for the Holy Qur'ān in the introduction of his exegesis upon this divine text.[1] Most of what he mentions, should more accurately, be considered traits rather than names. Al-Ṭabarsī, in *Majmaʿ al-Bayān,* mentions just four names for the Holy Book. These are Qur'ān, Furqān (Criterion), Kitāb (Book) and Dhikr (Invocation).[2] Badr al-Dīn al-Zarkashī[3] narrates that al-Haralī, in a treatise that he wrote on this topic, mentioned 90 names and traits for the Sacred Book. In the table below, we have listed 55 names and titles for the Holy Book mentioned by al-Qāḍī al-ʿAzīzī, the first 43 of which are in accordance to those listed by Abu'l-Futūḥ al-Rāzī.

S/N	*NAME/TRAIT*	*QUR'ĀNIC INSTANCE*	*CHAPTER NAME*	*VERSE NO.*
1	Qur'ān (Recitation)	Surely its collection and ***recitation*** are Our responsibility.	Al-Qiyāmah	17-18
2	Furqān (Criterion/ Standard)	O believers, if you follow the path shown by God, He will give you a ***standard*** (of right and wrong), ...	Al-Anfāl	29
		... and has sent the ***criterion*** (of falsehood and truth).	Āl-ʿImrān	3-4
		Blessed in he who revealed the ***Criterion*** (of right and wrong) to His votary ...	Al-Furqān	1
3	Kitāb (Book)	Surely those who read the ***Book*** of God, ...	Fāṭir	29
		We have sent down to you the ***Book*** containing the truth, ...	Al-Nisā'	105
		This is the ***Book*** free of doubt ...	Al-Baqarah	2
4	Dhikr	These verses that We read to you are signs and a ***reminder*** full of	Āl-ʿImrān	58

1. Refer to: Rāzī al-, Abu'l-Futūḥ, ***Rawḍ al-Jinān***, vol. 1, Introduction, pg. 5.
2. ***Tafsīr al-Ṭabarsī***, vol. 1, Introduction, pg. 14.
3. ***Al-Burhān***, vol. 1, pg. 272-276; ***al-Itqān***, vol. 1, pg. 143-146.

	(Invocation/ Remembrance/ Reminder/ Admonition)	wisdom.		
		Surely We have revealed the ***Reminder*** ...	Al-Ḥijr	9
		We had sent them with miracles and Books; and We have sent to you this ***Reminder*** ...	Al-Naḥl	44
		And most surely it is a ***reminder*** for you and your people, ...	Al-Zukhruf	44
		And this is a blessed ***reminder*** that We have sent down.	Al-Anbiyā'	50
		Saʿd, I swear by the Qur'ān, full of ***admonition.***	Ṣād	1
		This is nothing but a ***reminder*** and illuminating discourse,...	Yāsīn	69
		Those who reject the ***Reminder*** when it has come to them...	Fuṣṣilat	41
		And certainly We have made the Qur'ān easy for ***remembrance***, but	Al-Qamar	17
5	Tanzīl (Revelation)	And this (Qur'an) is a ***revelation*** from the Lord of all the worlds,	Al-Shuʿarā'	192
		Surely We Ourselves have revealed the Qur'ān to you in gradual ***revelation.***	Al-Insān	23
		...and We have revealed it, in a gradual ***revelation***.	Al-Isrā'	106

6	Ḥadīth (Discourse/ News)	God has sent down the very best ***discourse***,...	Al-Zumar	23
		Will you kill yourself for grief of them if they do not believe in this ***discourse***?	Al-Kahf	6
		Are you astonished at this ***news***,	Al-Najm	59
		So let them bring a ***discourse*** like it, if they are truthful	Al-Ṭūr	34
7	Mawʿiẓah (Warning)	O men, a ***warning*** has come to you from your Lord	Yūnus	57
8	Tadhkirah (Reminder***)***	It is really a ***reminder*** for those who fear God and follow the straight path.	Al-Ḥāqqah	48
		Verily this is a ***reminder***. So let him who desires take the way to his Lord.	Al-Muzzammil	19
9	Dhikrā (Reminder)	...Through them has the truth come to you, and guidance, and a ***reminder*** to those who believe	Hūd	120
10	Bayān (Declaration)	This is a clear ***declaration*** for mankind, and guidance and a warning for those who preserve themselves from evil.	Āl-ʿImrān	138
11	Hūdā (Guidance)	...a ***guidance*** for those who preserve themselves from evil and follow the straight path,	Al-Baqarah	2
12	Shifā' (Healing)	... Say: It is to those who believe a guidance and a ***healing***;...	Fuṣṣilat	44
13	Ḥukm (Judgment)	And thus have We revealed it, a true ***judgment*** in Arabic,...	Al-Raʿd	37
14	Ḥikmah (Wisdom)	And keep in mind what is recited in your houses of the communications of Allah and the ***wisdom***;...	Al-Aḥzāb	34

15	Ḥakīm (Wise)	This We recite to you of the communications and the ***wise*** reminder.	Āl-ʿImrān	58
16	Muhaymin (Guardian)	And We have revealed to you the Book with the truth, verifying what is before it of the Book and a ***guardian*** over it,...	Al-Mā'idah	48
17	Hādī (Guide)	***Guiding*** to the right way, so we believe in it,...	Al-Jinn	2
18	Nūr (Light)	... and follow the ***light*** which has been sent down with him, these it is that are the successful.	Al-Aʿrāf	157
19	Raḥmah (Mercy)	And most surely it is guidance and a ***mercy*** for the believers.	Al-Naml	77
20	ʿIṣmah (Protection)	And hold fast by (seek ***protection*** in) the covenant of Allah all together and be not disunited,...	Āl-ʿImrān	103
21	Niʿmah (Favor)	And as for the ***favor*** of your Lord,...	Al-Ḍuḥā	11
22	Ḥaqq (Certainty)	And most surely it is the true ***certainty***	Al-Ḥāqqah	51
23	Tibyān (Clear Explanation)	...and We have revealed the Book to you ***explaining clearly everything***...	Al-Naḥl	89
24	Baṣā'ir (Clear Argument)	And certainly We gave Mūsā the Book after We had destroyed the former generations, ***clear arguments*** for men and guidance and a mercy, that they may be mindful.	Al-Qaṣaṣ	43
25	Mubārak (Blessed)	And this is a ***blessed*** Reminder which We have revealed; will you then deny it?	Al-Anbiyā'	50

26	Majīd (Glorious)	Qāf. I swear by the ***glorious*** Qur'ān	Qāf	1
27	ʿAzīz (Mighty)	Surely those who disbelieve in the reminder when it comes to them, and most surely it is a ***Mighty*** Book:	Fuṣṣilat	41
28	ʿAẓīm (Grand)	And certainly We have given you seven of the oft-repeated (verses) and the ***grand*** Qur'ān.	Al-Ḥijr	87
29	Karīm (Honored)	Most surely it is an ***honored*** Qur'ān,	Al-Wāqiʿah	77
30	Sirāj (Torch)	And as one inviting to Allah by His permission, and as a light-giving ***torch***.	Al-Aḥzāb	46
31	Munīr (Light Giving)	And as one inviting to Allah by His permission, and as a ***light-giving*** torch.	Al-Aḥzāb	46
32	Bashīr (Herald of Good News)	A ***herald of good news*** and a warner, but most of them turn aside so they hear not.	Fuṣṣilat	4
33	Nadhīr (Warner)	A herald of good news and a ***warner***, but most of them turn aside so they hear not.	Fuṣṣilat	4
34	Sirāṭ (Path)	Keep us on the right ***path***.	Al-Fātiḥah	6
35	Ḥabl (Covenant)	And hold fast by the ***covenant*** of Allah all together and be not disunited	Āl-ʿImrān	103
36	Rūḥ (Spirit)	And thus did We reveal to you a ***spirit (***an inspired book) by Our command...	Al-Shūrā	52
37	Qaṣaṣ (Narratives)	We narrate to you the best of ***narratives***...	Yūsuf	3

38	Faṣl (Decisive)	Most surely it is a ***decisive*** word,	Al-Ṭāriq	13
39	Nujūm (Stars)	But nay! I swear by the falling of ***stars***; *(if by star we take it to mean the Qur'ān)	Al-Wāqiʿah	75
40	ʿAjab (Wondrous)	...then said: 'We have heard the ***wondrous*** Qur'an,	Al-Jinn	1
41	Qayyim (Rightly Directing)	***Rightly directing***, that he might give warning of severe punishment from Him ...	Al-Kahf	2
42	Mubīn (Manifest)	*alif Lam Ra*. These are the verses of the Book that makes (things) ***manifest***.	Yūsuf	1
43	ʿAlī (Truly Elevated)	And surely it is in the original of the Book with Us, ***truly elevated***, full of wisdom	Al-Zukhruf	4
44	Kalām (Word)	...grant him protection till he hears the ***word*** of Allah,...	Al-Tawbah	6
45	Qawl (Word)	And certainly We have made the ***word*** to reach them so that they may be mindful.	Al-Qaṣaṣ	51
46	Balāgh (Exposition)	This is a ***sufficient exposition*** for the people and that they may be warned thereby,...	Ibrāhīm	52
47	Mutashābih	God has sent down the very best discourse, the Book conformable in its ***juxtapositions***	Al-Zumar	23
48	ʿArabī (Arabic)	An ***Arabic*** Qur'ān without any crookedness, that they may guard	Al-Zumar	28

49	ʿAdl (Justice)	And the word of your Lord has been accomplished truly and ***justly***; there is none who can change His words, and He is the Hearing, the Knowing.	Al-Anʿām	115
50	Bushrā (Good News)	A guidance and ***good news*** for the believers,	Al-Naml	2
51	'Amr (Command)	That is the ***command*** of Allah which He has revealed to you, ...	Al-Ṭalāq	5
52	'Īmān (Faith)	Our Lord! surely we have heard a preacher calling to the ***faith***,...	Āl-ʿImrān	193
53	Naba' (Event)	About the great ***event***,	Al-Naba'	1-2
54	Waḥy (Revelation)	Say: I warn you only by ***revelation***; and the deaf do not hear the call whenever they are warned.	Al-Anbiyā'	45
55	ʿIlm (Knowledge)	...and if you follow their low desires after what has come to you of ***knowledge***, ...	Al-Raʿd	37

Meanings of the Words Sūrah and Āyah

The Arabic word *sūrah* has been derived from *sūr al-balad*; the wall of a city. This is because each *Sūrah* forms a proverbial wall around the verses that it holds within itself, similar to how the walls of a city form a barrier around the houses situated inside.

Others believe that the word *sūrah* stands for nobility and high standing. Ibn Firās has also mentioned *greatness and majestic height* as one of the meanings of the said word. The Arabic verb *sāra* (with its present tense *yasūr*), which means to become angry or to become aroused, originates from the same root as that of the word *sūrah*. Similarly, each floor within a building is also known as *sūrah*.

Abu'l-Futūḥ al-Rāzī says, "Let it be known that the word *sūrah* means a high level from amongst the levels of dignity. The meaning has been used in a poetic verse composed by al-Nābighah al-Dhubyānī, one of the famous Arab poets who lived before the advent of Islam.

Abu'l-Futūḥ goes on to say that the given word is often used to signify the walls of a city, because such walls are high and mighty in nature.[1]

Others believe that the word originates from the Arabic noun *su'r* meaning leftover or residue.

Abu'l-Futūḥ says, "The word *su'r* originates from *su'r al-mā'* (residual water). The Arabs frequently use the phrase *as'artu fī'l-inā'* meaning, 'I left it over in the container' (using the past tense verb derived from *su'r*). This is why Aʿshā Banī-Thaʿlabah, a famous Arab poet, uses the said verb in one of his verses.

In brief, the word *sūrah* was originally *sūrah* but later on, for the purpose of ease, the pronunciation was slightly altered. This change was such that no reciter has ever recited the word using its original pronunciation, nor is the original form found anywhere in the Qur'ān.

Literally, the word *āyah* means a sign. This word has been used since every verse of the Holy Qur'ān is in itself a sign showing the veracity and eternal truth of God's message. According to another understanding, each verse represents a sign illuminating the moral codes, advice, wisdom and laws that God seeks to transfer to humanity.

﴿وَلَقَدۡ أَنزَلۡنَآ إِلَيۡكَ ءَايَٰتِۭ بَيِّنَٰتٖۖ وَمَا يَكۡفُرُ بِهَآ إِلَّا ٱلۡفَٰسِقُونَ﴾

"And certainly We have revealed to you clear communications and none disbelieve in them except the transgressors."[2]

﴿تِلۡكَ ءَايَٰتُ ٱللَّهِ نَتۡلُوهَا عَلَيۡكَ بِٱلۡحَقِّۚ وَإِنَّكَ لَمِنَ ٱلۡمُرۡسَلِينَ﴾

"These are the communications of Allah: We recite them to you with truth; and most surely you are (one) of the apostles."[3]

1. ***Rawḍ al-Jinān***, vol. 1, Introduction, pg. 9.
2. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Baqarah (2:99).
3. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Baqarah (2:252).

﴿ أَيَوَدُّ أَحَدُكُمۡ أَن تَكُونَ لَهُۥ جَنَّةٌ مِّن نَّخِيلٖ وَأَعۡنَابٖ تَجۡرِي مِن تَحۡتِهَا ٱلۡأَنۡهَٰرُ لَهُۥ فِيهَا مِن كُلِّ ٱلثَّمَرَٰتِ وَأَصَابَهُ ٱلۡكِبَرُ وَلَهُۥ ذُرِّيَّةٞ ضُعَفَآءُ فَأَصَابَهَآ إِعۡصَارٞ فِيهِ نَارٞ فَٱحۡتَرَقَتۡۗ كَذَٰلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ ٱللَّهُ لَكُمُ ٱلۡأٓيَٰتِ لَعَلَّكُمۡ تَتَفَكَّرُونَ ﴾

"Does one of you like that he should have a garden of palms and vines with streams flowing beneath it; he has in it all kinds of fruits; and old age has overtaken him and he has weak offspring, when, (lo!) a whirlwind with fire in it smites it and it is blasted; thus Allah makes the communications clear to you, that you may reflect."[1]

Al-Jāḥiẓ, a famous Arab man of letters, says, "God named His Book the Qur'ān in opposition to the trend followed by most Arabs wherein they used to call any collection of poetry a *dīwān*. Similarly, He named each chapter of His book *sūrah* and every verse a *āyah*, whereas the Arabs used to call such poetic divisions *qaṣīdah* and would name each single verse *bayt*. In addition, God also made his verses rhyme with one another."[2]

Al-Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī says, "It is possible that the root of this word be *ayy* meaning *which*. Every Qur'ānic verse does indeed act as a separator, signifying *which is which*. However, a more correct opinion dictates that the said word originates from *ta'ayyun* meaning stability. We see that Arabs often use the command verse *ta'ayya* to express compromise. Another possibility traces the word's derivation to the phrase *āwā* which means *to seek refuge* or *to replace*. Every high building is also known as *āyah*. The Qur'ān says:

﴿ أَتَبۡنُونَ بِكُلِّ رِيعٍ ءَايَةٗ تَعۡبَثُونَ ﴾

"Do you build on every height a monument? Vain is it that you do:"[3]

Al-Rāghib goes on to say, "Every sentence from the Holy Qur'ān that signifies a complete meaning, and conveys a law from amongst the laws of God, is called *Āyah*. This *Āyah* may form an entire *Sūrah*, or it may comprise a few parts of a *Sūrah*, or it may constitute just one part of a *Sūrah*, or even just one meaningful statement separate from others. Therefore, it is possible to divide any given *Sūrah* into *Āyāt*, or verses, that it contains."[4]

It is important to note that the number of verses within every chapter has

1. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Baqarah (2:266).
2. ***Al-Itqān***, vol. 1, pg. 143.
3. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Shuʿarā' (26:128).
4. ***Al-Mufradāt***, under the title *ayyun* (أيٌ).

been ascertained by God Himself, and cannot be tampered with. Thus, we see that the shortest Qur'ānic chapter, being Sūrah al-Kawthar, contains only three verses, whereas the longest Qur'ānic chapter, that is, Sūrah al-Baqarah, consists of two hundred and eighty six verses. The number of verses in each chapter was cemented during the lifetime of the Sacred Messenger (ṣ) and this process took place by command of the Holy Prophet (ṣ) himself. Therefore, there has been no change in this matter ever since. We believe that there exists a divine secret in this arrangement, an arrangement that constitutes one of hidden miracles of the Qur'ān.

The Names of the Chapters

The names of the Qur'ānic chapters, like the number of verses they contain, were determined by the Holy Prophet (ṣ) himself and cannot be tampered with. Most chapters have only one name. However, some chapters have several names. These names were coined, in accordance to Arab tradition, based on the least degree of correlation.[1] We have explained some of these names below:

CHAPTER NAME	***REASONS OF COINAGE***
Al-Baqarah	The usage of this word and discussions of the calf (which is its meaning) have taken place only in the chapter. Although the word *baqar* can be seen in Sūrah al-Anʿām (verse 144-146) and the word *baqarāt* appears in Sūrah Yūsuf (verse 43-46). However, the length of the discussion surrounded the calf in this chapter is far more than any other chapter of the Qur'ān
Āl-ʿImrān	The said word appears twice in this chapter (verse 33 and 35) and cannot be found anywhere else in the Holy Book.
Al-Nisā'	In seventeen verse of this chapter we find laws regarding *nisā'* or women
Al-Mā'idah	The word *mā'idah* appears only in the chapter (verse 112 and 114) and is not used anywhere else in the Qur'ān.
Al-Anʿām	The said word appears six times in this chapter which is more than any other chapter of the Qur'ān
Al-Aʿrāf	Only in this chapter has the word been used twice (verse 46 and 48)
Al-Anfāl	Only in this chapter has the word been used twice (verse 1)

1. Refer to: ***Al-Burhān***, vol. 1, pg. 270; ***al-Itqān***, vol. 1, pg. 159.

Barā'ah (al-Tawbah)	This chapter discusses the issue of *barā'ah* or exculpation of Allah and his messenger from the sins of the polytheist in manner found nowhere else in the Qur'ān
Yūnus	It is the only chapter of the Qur'ān that talks about the life of the prophet Yūnus.
Hūd	It is the only chapter of the Qur'ān that talks about the life of the prophet Hūd
Yūsuf	The blessed name of this prophet has been repeated twenty five times in this chapter
Al-Raʿd	It is the only chapter that speaks of thunder as it glorifies God (verse 13). However, the word itself is also present in Sūrah al-Baqarah (verse 19).
Ibrāhīm	The supplications and prayers of the prophet Ibrāhīm regarding the city of Makkah and his blessed progeny have been mentioned at length in this chapter.
Al-Ḥijr	It is the only chapter that speaks of the companions of al-Ḥijr
Al-Naḥl	It is the only chapter that speaks of bees, *naḥl*
Al-Isrā'	It is the only chapter that mentions the incident of the Holy Prophet's ascent to the heavens; i.e. *isrā'*
Al-Kahf	It is the only chapter that speaks of the Companions of the Cave (the seven sleepers of Ephesus)
Maryam	It is the only chapter that mentions a detailed account of the life of Lady Maryam, or Virgin Mary, (verse 15-35). However, a shorter mention has been made of her in Sūrah Āl-ʿImrān but not by name.
Ṭā-Hā	The chapter starts with these two Arabic letters
Al-Anbiyā'	It is the only chapter that speaks of the well known prophets (those well known amongst the Arabs)
Al-Ḥajj	It chapter discusses in detail the laws governing the Ḥajj pilgrimage and commands the Muslims to perform the Ḥajj (verse 25-38)
Al- Mu'minūn	This chapter starts with a sentence that contains this word
Al-Nūr	The Verse of Light (Āyah al-Nūr) exists in this chapter
Al-Furqān	In the chapter, the Qur'ān has been called *furqān* and its revelation and descent have been discussed. It is in this chapter that God congratulated Himself.

Al-Shuʿarā'	It is the only chapter wherein this word has been used
Al-Naml	It is the only chapter that speaks of ants; that is, *naml*
Al-Qaṣaṣ	The word has been used in the chapter, both its noun and its verb. The verb has also been used in Sūrah Yūsuf, however, in that said chapter the word *yūsuf* itself was more appropriate for being used as the title of the chapter
Al-ʿAnkabūt	It is the only chapter wherein this word is mentioned
Al-Rūm	It is the only chapter wherein this name is mentioned
Al-Sajdah	It has been named such because it contains the verse of *sajdah* or prostration. Three other chapters also contain such verses but there the preference was with other names
Al-Aḥzāb	It is the only chapter wherein the event of the *Aḥzāb*, or the allies, has been mentioned
Saba'	It is the only chapter that incorporates this word

As can be seen, in each case there exists a reason. However, the mentioned reasons are not exhaustive in nature because, as we mentioned before, the smallest correlation is considered enough for justifying the coining of a name.

The Multiplicity of Names for Some Chapter

Most chapters have only one name. However, there are chapters that have for themselves several titles, each of them coined from a different perspective.

Sūrah al-Fātiḥah, for example, is also called al-Ḥamd, Fātiḥat al-Kitāb, Ummu'l-Kitāb and al-Sabʿ al-Mathānī. Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī mentions more than twenty names for this particular Qur'ānic chapter[1].

The name Fātiḥat al-Kitāb (the exordium of the book) was coined because this chapter stood to be the first chapter of the Holy Qur'ān. It is not only the first chapter in the Qur'ānic codex, but was also the first complete chapter to be revealed onto the Holy Prophet (ṣ).

Ummu'l-Kitāb, wherein the word *umm* means goal and purpose, is a name coined due to the fact that this chapter encompasses, in itself, all the goals and purposes of the Holy Qur'ān. In fact, it is also called the greatest of the Qur'ānic chapters due to this very reason.

1. ***Al-Itqān***, vol. 1, pg. 151.

Al-Sabʿ al-Mathānī was coined because the said chapter contains seven verses and is oft repeated. Al-Mathānī is also used to signify all short chapters of the Holy Qur'ān. This is because they are repeated more often than lengthier chapters.

Other chapters with multiple names are as follows:

Al-Tawbah, Barā'ah	al-Naba', ʿAmma
Al-Isrā',[1] Subḥān, Bani-Isrā'īl	al-Bayyinah, Lam Yakun
Al-Naml, Sulaymān	al-Māʿūn, al-Dīn, Ara'ayta
Ghāfir, al-Mu'min	al-Masad, Tabbat, al-Lahab
Fuṣṣilat, Ḥā-Mīm al-Sajdah	al-Tawḥīd, al-Ikhlāṣ[2]
Muḥammad, al-Qitāl	al-Dahr, al-Insān, Hal-Atā
Al-Qamar, Iqtarabat	Quraysh, al-Īlāf
Al-Mulk, Tabāraka	al-Sharḥ, al-Inshirāḥ
Al-Maʿārij, Sa'ala, Wāqiʿ	

Names of the Different Sections from Amongst the Qur'ānic Chapters

1. Al-Sabʿ al-Ṭiwāl: These are the seven lengthy chapters; namely al-Baqarah, Āl-ʿImrān, al-Nisā', al-Aʿrāf, al-Anʿām, al-Mā'idah and Yūnus.

2. Al-Mi'ā'īn: Chapters that contain more than a hundred verses but are not as lengthy as the seven chapters mentioned above. These are around twelve chapters including Hūd, Yūsuf, al-Naḥl, al-Kahf, Maryam and others.

3. Al-Mathānī: These are around twenty chapters, which contain fewer than one hundred verses. They are named al-Mathānī because they can be repeated more frequently due to their shorter length.

4. Al-Ḥawamīm: They are the seven chapters that start with the letters Ḥā-Mīm. These are Ghāfir, Fuṣṣilat, al-Shuʿarā', al-Zukhruf, al-Dukhān, al-Jāthiyah and al-Aḥqāf.

5. Al-Mumtaḥināt: These are around twenty chapters namely al-Fatḥ, al-Ḥashr, al-Sajdah, al-Ṭalāq, al-Qalam, al-Ḥujurāt, Tabāraka (al-Mulk), al-Taghābun, al-Munāfiqūn, al-Jumuʿah, al-Ṣaff, al-Jinn, Nūḥ, al-Mujādilah, al-

1. This word has also being used as a past tense verb derived from the infinitive tense اسراء.
2. Refer to: ***Al-Itqān***, vol. 1, pg. 155-159.

Mumtaḥanah and al-Taḥrīm.

6. Al-Mufaṣṣalāt: These are all the chapters from Sūrah al-Raḥmān to the end of the Holy Qur'ān. They have been named so because the intermediary distance between each chapter is very short.

The Grammatical Inflections of the Chapter Names

The name of a chapter is *ʿalam* (or proper noun) for that particular chapter and therefore, according to the grammatical rules of the Arabic language, if this attribute gets coupled up with one other justification, the said name would in effect become *ghayr munṣariḥ*.[1] Therefore, the names Yūnus, Yūsuf, Ibrāhīm, Luqmān and Saba' are all *ghayr munṣarif* because they are all non-Arabic words in origin (being non-Arabic qualifies as an additional justification). Similarly, chapter names like ʿAbasa, Fuṣṣilat, Iqtarabat, Qul-Ūḥiya, Tabāraka, Tabbat and Lam-Yakun are also *ghayr munṣarif*, because all these words were originally verbs and not nouns. Chapter names like al-Fātiḥah, al-Tawbah (Barā'ah), Quraysh and Maryam are also *ghayr munṣarif* because they are feminine tense words. Al-ʿImrān, al-Insān and al-Raḥmān are such because they end with sound */ān/*. However, most other chapter names do not fall into this category, often because they end with the alphabets *alif* and *Lām*.

Some names are *mabnī*[2] because they are composed of only one or two alphabets. Examples are Qāf, Ṣād, Yā-Sīn and Ṭā-Hā.

Some names are such that if they had not been proper nouns, according to the rules of Arabic morphology, their shape would have changed when used in different states. However, since they have become proper nouns they accept grammatical inflections like word that consist of a permanent composition. The chapter name al-Muṭaffifīn remains unchanged in its composition in all three forms that a noun can take in the Arabic language and accept grammatical inflections upon its last alphabet only. Al-Mu'minūn and al-Kāfirūn are similar to the previous example in this regard. Abū-Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī says, "Names that were originally sentences, or were verbs not containing a hidden pronoun, must be dealt with like words that are *ghayr munṣariḥ*. This is because they are no longer sentences or verbs, but have transformed into nouns. Only chapter names, which are not comprised of separate disconnected alphabets and contain the letters *alif* and

1. *ghayr munṣariḥ* is a fully indeclinable word unable to accept all the possible morphological states and inflections.
2. *Mabnī* words, or 'Built Words' are words that do not exhibit case or mood inflection at all.

Lām are to be dealt with as *muʿrab.*[1]"[2]

The Number of Qur'ānic Chapters and Verses

The Holy Qur'ān contains 114 chapters from the era of revelation to the present day. This number is consolidated and confirmed by consistent and innumerable traditions that speak of the total number of Qur'ānic chapters. Any number above or below is totally without proof.

It has been said that ʿAbdullāh ibn Masʿūd's codex did not contain Sūrah al-Fātiḥah, Sūrah al-Falaq, and Sūrah al-Nās. This is because he believed Sūrah al-Fātiḥah to be equivalent to the whole Qur'ān and, as a result, separate from it. He based his argument upon this verse:

﴿ وَلَقَدْ ءَاتَيْنَٰكَ سَبْعًا مِّنَ ٱلْمَثَانِى وَٱلْقُرْءَانَ ٱلْعَظِيمَ ﴾

"And certainly We have given you seven of the oft-repeated (verses) and the grand Qur'an."[3]

He argued that, in this given verse, the 'seven oft repeated verses' have been placed opposite to the entire Qur'ān, thus indicating that they are separate and equal. As for the last two chapters of the Holy Qur'ān, he did not accept them as Qur'ānic chapters at all, but believed them to be prayers revealed to the Holy Prophet (ṣ) as remedies for the evil eye. He argued that God had given them to the Prophet (ṣ) to cure his two beloved grandsons Imam al-Ḥasan and Imam al-Ḥusayn (ʿa). Therefore, whenever he came across a codex inclusive of these two chapters, he would remove them promptly, declaring, "Do not mix the Qur'ān with that which is alien to it."

The codex of Ubayy ibn Kaʿb held 115 chapters. He believed that the two chapters Sūrah al-Fīl and Sūrah Quraysh were, in fact, only one chapter and, thus, did not place a *basmalah* (i.e. *bismillāhirraḥmānirraḥīm*) in between them. Apart from this, his codex included two extra chapters named al-Ḥafd and al-Khalʿ.

The length of each particular verse was also ascertained by the Holy Prophet (ṣ) and thus, cannot be tampered with. These lengths, that form the basis of separation and differentiation between individual verses, have reached us through the direct narrative traditions of the Holy Prophet (ṣ). They are, therefore, not a matter where juristic opinion can be put into effect. It must

1. *Muʿrab* words are those exhibiting full case and mood inflection, and are able to accept all the morphological states.
2. ***Al-Itqān***, vol. 1, pg. 162-163.
3. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Ḥijr (15:87).

be noted that the criterion for these separations is not the completion of a particular subject matter, since we have many verses that end without the subject matter having reached a conclusion. Therefore, the length of a verse is not related to the subject matter it seeks to convey, rather, it is simply determined by divine decree. There do exist some small differences in narrations regarding the length of certain verses. This is because the Holy Prophet (ṣ) would sometimes cut off his recitation of a certain verse, at a particular place, without prior notice. This led to some companions wrongly assuming that the verse itself had reached an end. However, the Prophet (ṣ) would recite the same verse at another time without stopping in its middle; thus, showing that the earlier pause had not been indicative of a conclusion.

It has been narrated by Ibn ʿAbbās that the Qur'ān contains a total number of 6,600 verses, and that the Holy Book consists of 320,671 alphabets. There exists a difference of opinion with regard to the total number of word in the Qur'ān. Some believe it to be 77,277, while others hold it to be 77,934, and yet another group claims that this number is 77,434.

The correct number of verses in the Holy Qur'ān is 6,236. This is a number mentioned in traditions narrated by the scholars of al-Kūfah city, which stand to be the most accurate and correct traditions dealing with this matter. These traditions have been narrated upon the authority of Amir al-Mu'minīn Imam ʿAlī ibn Abī-Ṭālib (ʿa).[1] Today, the total number of verses found in the Holy Qur'ān is, in fact, this very number. This number is derived by taking the *basmalah* of Sūrah al-Fātiḥah as an independent verse, while the *basmalah* of other chapters is not considered an independent verse. This calculation also considers the detached alphabets, which appear in the beginning of some Qur'ānic chapters, as independent verses. Some scholars disagree with this calculation.[2]

The Number of Verses in each Chapter, as Narrated by the Scholars of al-Kūfah[3]

The following table elaborates upon the number of verses within each Qur'ānic chapter:

1. ***Al-Itqān***, vol. 1, pg. 189-190 & 197.
2. Ibid.
3. The total number of verses in the Qur'ān, according to these narrations is 6,236. These narrations reach us upon the authority of Ibn Abī-Laylā, who narrates upon the authority of Abū-ʿAbd al-Raḥmān, who, in turn narrates upon the authority of Imam ʿAlī Amīr al-Mu'minīn (ʿa).

S/N	CHAPTER	VERSES	S/N	CHAPTER	VERSES
1	Al-Fātiḥah	7	2	Al-Baqarah	286
3	Āl-ʿImrān	200	4	Al-Nisā'	176
5	Al-Mā'idah	120	6	Al-Anʿām	165
7	Al-Aʿrāf	206	8	Al-Anfāl	75
9	Al-Tawbah	129	10	Yūnus	109
11	Hūd	123	12	Yūsuf	111
13	Al-Raʿd	43	14	Ibrāhīm	52
15	Al-Ḥijr	99	16	Al-Naḥl	128
17	Al-Isrā'	111	18	Al-Kahf	110
19	Maryam	98	20	Ṭā-Hā	135
21	Al-Anbiyā'	112	22	Al-Ḥajj	78
23	Al-Mu'minūn	118	24	Al-Nūr	64
25	Al-Furqān	77	26	Al-Shuʿarā'	227
27	Al-Naml	93	28	Al-Qaṣaṣ	88
29	Al-ʿAnkabūt	69	30	Al-Rūm	600
31	Luqmān	34	32	Al-Sajdah	30
33	Al-Aḥzāb	73	34	Saba'	54
35	Fāṭir	45	36	Yāsīn	83
37	Al-Ṣāffāt	182	38	Ṣād	88
39	Al-Zumar	75	40	Ghāfir	85
41	Fuṣṣilat	54	42	Al-Shūrā	53
43	Al-Zukhruf	89	44	Al-Dukhān	59
45	Al-Jāthiyah	37	46	Al-Aḥqāf	35
47	Muḥammad	38	48	Al-Fatḥ	29
49	Al-Ḥujurāt	18	50	Qāf	45
51	Al-Dhāriyāt	60	52	Al-Ṭūr	49
53	Al-Najm	62	54	Al-Qamar	55
55	Al-Raḥmān	78	56	Al-Wāqiʿah	96
57	Al-Ḥadīd	29	58	Al-Mujādilah	22
59	Al-Ḥashr	24	60	Al-Mumtaḥanah	13
61	Al-Ṣaff	14	62	Al-Jumuʿah	11
63	Al-Munāfiqūn	11	64	Al-Taghābun	18
65	Al-Ṭalāq	12	66	Al-Taḥrīm	12
67	Al-Mulk	30	68	Al-Qalam	52

69	Al-Ḥāqqah	52	***70***	Al-Maʿārij	44
71	Nūḥ	28	***72***	Al-Jinn	28
73	Al-Muzzammil	20	***74***	Al-Muddaththir	56
75	Al-Qiyāmah	40	***76***	Al-Insān	31
77	Al-Mursalāt	50	***78***	Al-Naba'	40
79	Al-Nāziʿāt	46	***80***	ʿAbasa	42
81	Al-Takwīr	29	***82***	Al-Infiṭār	19
83	Al-Muṭaffifīn	36	***84***	Al-Inshiqāq	25
85	Al-Burūj	22	***86***	Al-Ṭāriq	17
87	Al-Aʿlā	19	***88***	Al-Ghāshiyah	26
89	Al-Fajr	30	***90***	Al-Balad	20
91	Al-Shams	15	***92***	Al-Layl	21
93	Al-Ḍuḥā	11	***94***	Al-Sharḥ	8
95	Al-Tīn	8	***96***	Al-ʿAlaq	19
97	Al-Qadr	5	***98***	Al-Bayyinah	8
99	Al-Zalzalah	8	***100***	Al-ʿĀdiyāt	11
101	Al-Qāriʿah	11	***102***	Al-Takāthur	8
103	Al-ʿAṣr	3	***104***	Al-Humazah	9
105	Al-Fīl	5	***106***	Quraysh	4
107	Al-Māʿūn	7	***108***	Al-Kawthar	3
109	Al-Kāfirūn	6	***110***	Al-Naṣr	3
111	Al-Masad	5	***112***	Al-Ikhlāṣ	4
113	Al-Falaq	5	***114***	Al-Nās	6

CHAPTER THREE:
THE COLLECTION AND COMPILATION OF THE HOLY QUR'ĀN

The collection and compilation of the whole Qur'ān, as we have it today, did not take place in one single period. This process took place over an extended period and through the efforts of several different individuals. The chapters themselves and the sequence of verses that they contain were both, nevertheless, determined during the life of the Prophet (ṣ) upon his personal behest. This sequence is divinely sanctioned and cannot be tampered with. Each chapter would begin with the descent of a *basmalah* and similarly, the descent of a successive *basmalah* would be indicative of the start of a subsequent chapter. This represented the natural course of events. However, in contrast to this natural order, the Prophet (ṣ) would occasionally command that a verse be placed in another location. He did this due to directions that he received from God through the Archangel Gabriel. An example of such an event is the placement of the following verse in Sūrah al-Baqarah between the verse of usury and the verse of religion:

﴿ وَٱتَّقُواْ يَوۡمٗا تُرۡجَعُونَ فِيهِ إِلَى ٱللَّهِۖ ثُمَّ تُوَفَّىٰ كُلُّ نَفۡسٖ مَّا كَسَبَتۡ وَهُمۡ لَا يُظۡلَمُونَ﴾

"And guard yourselves against a day in which you shall be returned to Allah; then every soul shall be paid back in full what it has earned, and they shall not be dealt with unjustly"[1]

Therefore, the placement of verses and their sequence in each chapter, whether it be according to the natural order or not, is a matter decided for us by divine decree and put into effect by the Prophet (ṣ) himself. Given this fact, it is immutable and every Muslim is duty bound to accept it as it exists.

As for the sequence of the chapters themselves, we find that scholars are at odds with one another with reference to this issue. Sayyid Murtaḍā ʿAlam al-Hūdā and many other researchers, and from amongst the contemporary scholars Ayatollah al-Khū'ī, believe that the Qur'ān, as we have it today, was compiled during the time of the Prophet (ṣ). They believe that, with the existence of numerous memorizers of the Holy Qur'ān in that era, it is extremely improbable that the sequential compilation of Qur'ānic chapters not have already taken place. Secondly, they argue that a matter of such

1. The Holy Qur'ān, al-Baqarah (2:281).

grave importance could not have been ignored by the Holy Prophet (ṣ) and, thus, could not have taken place after his demise.

This opinion is not acceptable, since the mere existence of memorizers, or collectors of the Holy Qur'ān, does not necessitate that the sequence between the various Qur'ānic chapters be already established. It is possible that the said individuals carried out their said activities while the Qur'ān was still in a scattered state. As for the second argument presented above, we see no great importance in the sequential compilation of Qur'ānic chapters. What really mattered was the completion of each individual chapter. It was extremely important to demarcate the verses belonging to each individual chapter, to prevent all possible confusion in between the contents of various chapters. This matter, due to its clear and undeniable significance, was meticulously completed during the life of the Holy Prophet (ṣ). However, the sequence of the chapters themselves was an issue that could not be resolved at that time; since as long as the Prophet (ṣ) lived, the possibility of new revelation also continued to exist with him. This possibility, thus, rendered it impossible to determine the exact sequence of Qur'ānic chapters. It was only after the Holy Prophet's (ṣ) demise that this possibility finally came to an end and the sequential compilation of Qur'ānic chapters became feasible.

The opinion adhered to by a majority of scholars is that the determination of the said sequence, and the compilation of the Qur'ān in general, took place after the demise of the Holy Prophet (ṣ). The first such compilation was completed by Imam ʿAlī (ʿa) and subsequent compilation work was carried out by Zayd ibn Thābit along with other companions. This matter, the compilation of the Qur'ān after the demise of the Holy Prophet (ṣ), is an issue of absolute certitude in Islamic history.

As we have already mentioned, the first such compilation took place through the efforts of Imam ʿAlī (ʿa). According to traditions that speak of this matter, ʿAlī (ʿa) chose to remain within his house after the demise of the Holy Prophet (ṣ) and did not leave until he had finished this great work. This process took him a total of six months.

Ibn al-Nadīm says, "The first codex was that of ʿAlī (ʿa). This manuscript remains with the children of Jaʿfar (ʿa)."

He goes on to say, "I have witnessed a codex, in the care of Abū-Yaʿlā Ḥamzah al-Ḥasanī, which is written in the handwriting of ʿAlī (ʿa). A few of its pages have dropped out. This codex has come to the children of al-Ḥasan ibn ʿAlī (ʿa) by way of inheritance."[1]

Ibn Sīrīn quotes that ʿIkrimah told him of a codex that existed during the

1. ***Al-Fahrist***, pg. 47-48.

early days of Abū-Bakr's reign and had been compiled by ʿAlī (ʿa). Ibn Sīrīn says that he asked ʿIkrimah about the sequence of the chapters in this codex. He said, "Was the sequence according to the sequence of descent?" To this, ʿIkrimah replied, "If all the Jinn, and all of humanity, were to unite to compile a codex comparable to that of ʿAlī (ʿa), they would surely fail."

Ibn Sīrīn goes on to say, "I tirelessly tried to find this codex, but my efforts were of no avail."[1]

Ibn al-Jawzī al-Kalbī comments, "If the codex of ʿAlī (ʿa) could be found, it would be overflowing with knowledge and wisdom."[2]

The Characteristics of the Codex of ʿAlī (ʿa)

The codex of Imam ʿAlī (ʿa) had traits that do not exist in other codices. We shall mention a few of these characteristics below:

1. The sequence of verses and chapters was in accordance with the sequence of descent: With meticulous accuracy, Makkan revelation preceded the Madīnite chapters. This sequential arrangement was such that the chronological evolution of Islamic law could be witnessed with great clarity. Especially the matter of *nāsikh* and *mansūkh* could be seen with complete certitude.

2. The verses, and the words that they contained, where exactly the same as those recited by the Holy Prophet (ṣ) himself. This completely removed any possibility of a difference of opinion with regard to recitation. Therefore, this particular codex allowed for a correct comprehension of the Qur'ānic text and its exegesis. This was of crucial importance, since many a time incorrect exegeses are spawned of an incorrect understanding of a verse's recitation.

3. This codex comprised of a complete exegesis and explanation of the Qur'ānic text, as well as discourse about the contextual environment surrounding the descent of each Qur'ānic verse. This extra information was not intermingled with the Qur'ān's text, but was provided, additionally, in the form of marginal notes. These notes were of pivotal significance when it came to understanding the Qur'ān and its message.

Imam ʿAlī ibn Abī-Ṭālib (ʿa) declares,

> "Surely, I brought to them the Book, comprised of its revealed text and its

1. Ibn Saʿd, ***al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā***, vol. 2, pg. 101; Ibn ʿAbd al-Barr, ***al-Istīʿāb*** in the marginal notes of ***al-Iṣābah***, vol. 2, pg. 253; ***al-Itqān***, vol. 1, pg. 57.
2. Ibn al-Jawzī al-Kalbī, ***al-Tas-hīl li-ʿUlūm al-Tanzīl***, vol. 1, pg. 4; ***al-Tamhīd***, vol. 1.

(correct and complete) exegesis."[1]

In another place we find him saying,

> "Never was a verse revealed, but that the Holy Prophet (ṣ) recited it for me and ordered me to write it down. He would dictate to me its exegesis and its esoteric interpretation. He would identify for me *nāsikh* and *mansūkh*, as well as *muḥkam* and *mutashābih.*[2] He would then pray to God that I be rendered capable of memorizing and comprehending all the said verses. From that time onwards I have never forgotten a single verse, nor has a single one of his teachings ever slipped my mind."[3]

If the Muslim community had utilized the codex of Imam ʿAlī (ʿa), the numerous difficulties faced by us in understanding the exact meaning of the Qur'ān, would never have come about.[4]

What Became of ʿAlī's Codex?

Sulaym ibn Qays al-Hilālī (deceased 90 A.H.), a close companion of Imam ʿAlī ibn Abī-Ṭālib (ʿa), narrates the following upon the authority of Salmān al-Fārisī (the Persian):

When Imam ʿAlī (ʿa) witnessed the people mistreating him (usurping his right as heir to the Holy Prophet), he confined himself to his home. He decided not to leave until he had completed the compilation of the Holy Qur'ān. Before he engaged himself in this task, the Qur'ān existed in a scattered state, some of it written on pieces of paper, other sections inscribed upon thin sheets of wood and other mediums. Once ʿAlī (ʿa) had completed his work, he placed the codex upon a camel and, according to the report narrated by Yaʿqūbī, brought it to the mosque where the people stood, gathered around Abū-Bakr. He addressed the people and declared,

> "Since the demise of the Holy Prophet (ṣ), I have focused my efforts upon compiling the Holy Qur'ān and have collected it completely on this parchment. Never was a verse revealed but that the Prophet (ṣ) recited it to me and taught me its exegesis and its inner meanings. Now (that I have

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1. Balāghī al-, Muḥammad Jawād, ***Ālā' al-Raḥmān***, vol. 1, pg. 257.
2. Translator's note: *Muḥkam* verses are verses that are certain and foundational in their meaning. They form the core fundamentals of the Holy Qur'ān and serve to illuminate the meanings of other verses. *Mutashābih* verses are verses that require explanation. We need to be refer them back to *Muḥkam* verses in order to correctly understand their meanings.
3. ***Tafsīr Al-Burhān***, vol. 1, pg. 16, no. 14.
4. For a more detailed discussion regarding the characteristics of Imam ʿAli's codex, refer to ***Tārīkh al-Yaʿqūbī***, vol. 2, pg. 113.

brought you all that the Prophet (ṣ) taught me with regard to the Qur'ān) you can no longer say that you were in ignorance of it."

Then, one of the leaders of the people present there stood up, and upon examining what ʿAlī (ʿa) had brought, declared, "We have no need for that which you have brought us. What we have in our own custody satisfies all our needs."

Upon hearing this, ʿAlī (ʿa) said,

"Never again shall you see this!"

He then returned home. No one has ever seen that codex since.1

During ʿUthmān's era, when disagreements between the different existing codices became great, Ṭalḥah ibn ʿUbaydullāh came to ʿAlī (ʿa) and said, "Do you remember the day you presented the people with your codex and they rejected it. Present it today so that these disagreements come to an end!"

ʿAlī (ʿa) refrained from furnishing an answer, upon which Ṭalḥah repeated his proposition.

"I have remained silent purposefully," ʿAlī (ʿa) declared.

After a short hiatus, the Imam (ʿa) continued, "The Qur'ān that the people have with them today, is it a complete Qur'ān or does it have additions or deletions?"

Ṭalḥah answered that it was indeed the complete text. Therefore, ʿAlī (ʿa) said, "Then, whatever you receive from it shall lead you to salvation."

Having heard this, Ṭalḥah remarked, "If this is true, then it is enough."

Thus, the conversation came to an end.[2]

In reality, ʿAlī (ʿa) sought to achieve two goals by providing the answers cited above. The first was to preserve the unity of the Muslim nation and the second was to protect the infallibility and veracity of the Holy Qur'ān.

The Compilation of Zayd ibn Thābit

The will of the Holy Prophet (ṣ) was that the Qur'ān be compiled, so that it could be preserved for all times. He (ṣ) wanted to protect the Holy Qur'ān from a fate similar to that of the Torah, a divine scripture marred by large-scale corruption.[3] ʿAlī (ʿa) discharged the Prophet's will immediately after

1. ***Al-Saqīfah***, pg. 82.
2. ***Al-Saqīfah***, pg. 82.
3. ***Tafsīr al-Qummī,*** pg. 745.

his sad demise, but his codex, once completed, was rejected by the people. Nevertheless, the centrality of the Qur'ān, in terms of it being the focal reference point for all matters concerning the Muslim state and society, dictated that the caliphs take concrete measures for its preservation and compilation. This matter was made even more serious due to the martyrdom of seventy, and according to some narrations four hundred, memorizers of the Holy Qur'ān in the battle of al-Yamāmah.[1]

Based on the need that presented itself, the first caliph invited Zayd ibn Thābit to partake in the compilation of the Holy Qur'ān. Zayd reports, "Abū-Bakr invited me to his court where ʿUmar was already present. He spoke with ʿUmar for a while, seeking his advice, and then turned to me, 'Many a memorizer and reciter of the Holy Qur'ān have perished in the incident of al-Yamāmah and we fear that much worse could happen in future events. If this came to pass, the Qur'ān could be lost to us.' Having said this, he asked me to engage myself in the compilation of the Holy Book. I replied, 'How can you suggest an action that the Sacred Prophet (ṣ) chose not to perform?' They answered that the need had become vital and that there was no other way. They insisted upon the matter until, finally, I gave in to their demand. Abū-Bakr continued, 'I see that you are a wise young man, and never have I witnessed you engaging in vice. You were a scribe of the Holy Prophet (ṣ), now put yourself to task and complete this work with utmost care.' The weight of this difficult assignment, which they had forcibly placed upon my shoulders, was heavier than a mountain. However, I had no choice but to accept. I collected and compiled the Qur'ān that existed, until then, as scattered writings, portions of it written on pieces of wood, stone and other such mediums."[2]

Zayd's Methodology in Compiling the Holy Qur'ān

Zayd changed the Qur'ān from a scattered text, recorded here and there, into a formal codical manuscript. For this task, he first created a committee made up of a number of individuals from amongst the companions of the Holy Prophet (ṣ). Then, he announced that all available pieces of the Qur'ān be brought to the mosque in al-Madīnah.

Al-Yaʿqūbī reports, "He created a committee of 25 people, with himself as

1. ***Fatḥ al-Bārī***, vol. 7, pg. 447.
In this bloody event, 360 migrants (*muhājirūn*) and helpers (*anṣār*) from amongst those living in al-Madīnah, 300 migrants who lived in places other than al-Madīnah and 300 first generation disciples were killed. See ***Tārīkh al-Ṭabarī***, vol. 2, pg. 516.
2. ***Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī***, vol. 6, pg. 225; al-Sajistānī, ***Maṣāḥif***, pg. 6; Ibn Kathīr, ***Al-Kāmil fi'l-Tārīkh***, vol. 2, pg. 247 &, vol. 3, pg. 56; ***Al-Burhān***, vol. 1, pg. 233.

the leader. They would sit in the mosque all day.[1] The general public would bring to them everything they had of the Holy Qur'ān. The committee had set a dual criterion for verifying whether the texts brought to them were authentic or not. If the said standards were met, they would incorporate the proposed text, or else they would cast it away. The first criterion dictated that any such text be in written form, and second, that there be a witness from amongst the memorizers ready to vouch for the given entry. Herein, we must point out two important issues:

1. As an exception to this rule, two verses that occur in the end of Sūrah al-Tawbah were accepted from Khuzaymah ibn Thābit al-Anṣārī[2] without there being a witness from amongst the memorizers to verify the veracity of his text. This was because the Holy Prophet (ṣ) had declared Khuzaymah's word to be equal to that of two witnesses.[3]

2. The following line was not accepted, despite ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb's insistence.

الشَّيْخُ وَالشَّيْخَةُ إِذَا زَنَيَا فَارْجُمُوهُمَا الْبَتَّةَ

As for old man and old woman, if they commit adultery, then stone them to death.

He was unable to bring forward a witness to substantiate his claim. Even in his last days, ʿUmar continued to insist upon this matter and said, "If it were up to me, I would surely have it placed in the Holy Qur'ān."

This is how Zayd compiled the Holy Qur'ān, saving it from distortion and corruption. Whenever work on a particular chapter was completed, he would place the finished text into a box made out of leather known as a *rubʿ*.

1. ***Tārīkh al-Yaʿqūbī***, vol. 2, pg. 113.
2. Khuzaymah ibn Thābit was awarded the title "Owner of two witnesses." This was due to the fact that he took active part in all battles during the lifetime of the Holy Prophet (ṣ) and was from amongst the close companions of Imam ʿAlī (ʿa). He was present with Imam ʿAlī (ʿa) in the Battle of Ṣiffīn and the Battle of the Camel. It was he who, during the battle of Ṣiffīn, narrated a tradition of the Holy Prophet (ṣ) wherein he (ṣ) says, "'ʿAmmār shall be killed by a group of traitors." During the lifetime of the Holy Prophet (ṣ), he had vouched for the Messenger in a case where a Bedouin had accused him of stealing his horse. The Prophet (ṣ) claimed that the Bedouin had sold the animal to him. Khuzaymah had not seen the Prophet (ṣ) buying this horse but, nevertheless, bore witness because he solemnly believed that the Prophet (ṣ) could not have lied. Having heard his testimony, the Bedouin was taken by surprise. With his scheme against the Prophet (ṣ) failed, he testified that his accusation was false. By decree of the Prophet (ṣ), Khuzaymah's testimony was henceforth seen equal to that of two witnesses. See ***Usd al-Ghābah***, vol. 2, pg. 114.
3. Al-Sajistānī, ***al-Maṣāḥif***, pg. 6-9; ***Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī***, vol. 6, pg. 225.

Slowly all the chapters, one after the other, were completed and placed inside this container. However, Zayd specified no sequence for the chapters themselves.[1] The container, with all the completed chapters, was handed into the custody of Abū-Bakr. After the death of the first caliph, this box was transferred to the second, and upon his death, his daughter Ḥafṣah become its custodian. During the era of ʿUthmān, when the various codices of the Qur'ān were being made uniform, the third caliph took this original collection from Ḥafṣah and used it as a standard with which the other codices were compared. When his work ended, the box, and the manuscript within, was once again handed over to ʿUmar's daughter. Upon Ḥafṣah's death, Marwān, the governor of al-Madīnah under Muʿāwiyah's regime, took this manuscript into his custody and later had it destroyed.[2]

The Codices of the Companions

After the demise of the Holy Prophet (ṣ) and the rejection faced by Imam ʿAlī (ʿa), Zayd engaged himself with the task of compiling the Holy Qur'ān. There were, however, several other companions of the Holy Prophet (ṣ) involved in the same task, parallel to Zayd and his committee. Notable among such companions were ʿAbdullāh ibn Masʿūd, Ubayy ibn Kaʿb, al-Miqdād ibn al-Aswad, Sālim the freed slave of Abū-Ḥudhayfah, Muʿādh ibn Jabal and Abū-Mūsā al-Ashʿarī.

Sālim, the freed slave of Abū-Ḥudhayfah, is said to be the first person to have created a sequence between Qur'ānic chapters. Once the Qur'ān had been compiled and formally written down on parchments of paper, the companions sat down to assign a name to this new compilation. Some suggested that it be called *sifr* but this proposition was turned down because the word resembled what the Jews used to call their holy texts. Sālim suggested the word *muṣḥaf* or codex, a word he had seen used for collected written texts in Abyssinia. The companions were pleased by his idea, and henceforth, all compilations of the Qur'ān were named as such.[3] Here we shall shed light on some of the codices prepared by the various companions:

The Codex of Ibn Masʿūd

The codex of Ibn Masʿūd had several salient features to itself. We shall

1. ***Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr***, vol. 1, pg. 261; ***Al-Burhān***, vol. 2, pg. 35; ***al-Itqān***, vol. 1, pg. 58; ***Fatḥ al-Bārī***, vol. 9, pg. 16; al-Zarqānī, ***Manāhil al-ʿIrfān***, vol. 1, pg. 254; Aḥmad Amīn, ***Fakhr al-Islām***, pg. 195.
2. Ibn Ḥajar, ***Irshād al-Sārī fi Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī***, vol. 7, pg. 449; ***al-Tamhīd***, vol. 1, pg. 300.
3. Refer to: ***al-Kāmil fi'l-Tārīkh***, vol. 3, pg. 55; ***al-Itqān***, vol. 1, pg. 58; al-Sajistānī's ***al-Maṣāḥif***, pg. 11-14.

discuss a few as follows:

1. The sequence of the chapters was as such: al-Sabʿ al-Ṭiwāl, al-Mi'a'īn, al-Mathānī, al-Ḥawāmīm, al-Mumtaḥināt and al-Mufaṣṣalāt.

2. This codex consisted of 111 chapters. It did not contain Sūrah al-Fātiḥah, Sūrah al-Falaq and Sūrah al-Nās. He believed that the very task of preparing a codex for Qur'ānic chapters was to prevent them from being lost, whereas Sūrah al-Fātiḥah, due to its oft-repeated nature, could not be lost and, thus, there was no need to record it in this manner.[1] Another version reports that he believed this chapter to be an equal but separate entity from the rest of the Qur'ān. As for the other two chapters, he argued that they were never part of the Holy Qur'ān. Rather, he held them to be prayers granted by God to the Holy Prophet (ṣ) as remedies for the evil-eye and other types of black magic. The Prophet (ṣ) would use them to keep his grandsons al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn (ʿa) safe from such occurrences. Whenever Ibn Masʿūd saw these two chapters included in a given codex of the Holy Qur'ān, he would separate them from it, declaring, "Do not mix the Qur'ān with that which is alien to it." Ibn Masʿūd would never recite these two chapters during his prayers.[2]

3. The author of *al-Iqnāʿ* reports that in the codex of Ibn Masʿūd Sūrah al-Tawbah started with *basmalah* (whereas this chapter is the only chapter of the Qur'ān that does not start with this phrase). He then continues to declare that this codex should not be considered authentic.[3]

4. This codex bore many differences, in terms of words and verses, to that which was popularly accepted as divine revelation. This was because Ibn Masʿūd believed it possible to replace Qur'ānic words with other words of same meaning. According to his understanding of the issue, it was possible to do this if the original words proved to be too difficult for the reader. He changed the word *zukhruf* to the word *dhahab* and, similarly, replaced the word *ʿahn* with *ṣūf*. He believed this to be permissible because both changes had no effect on the meaning of the text at hand. When teaching the Qur'ān to a non-Arab learner, for whom the word *athīm* proved difficult to pronounce, he suggested that the student recite the verse in question while replacing the said word with the word *fājir*.[4]

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1. Ibn Qutaybah, ***Ta'wīl Mushkil al-Qur'ān***, pg. 48-49.
2. ***Al-Durr al-Manthūr***, vol. 6, pg. 416-417; ***Fatḥ al-Bārī***, vol. 8, pg. 581.
3. ***Al-Itqān***, vol. 1, pg. 65.
4. Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī, ***Muʿjam al-Udabā'***, vol. 4, pg. 193; Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, ***al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr***, vol. 1, pg. 213; ***Jāmiʿ Al-BayānTafsīr al-Ṭabarī***, vol. 15, pg. 163 &, vol. 23, pg. 96; ***Ta'wīl Mushkil al-Qur'ān***, pg. 24.

5. Ibn Masʿūd had also changed a few words of the Qur'ān in order to clarify the meanings of certain verses. One of the verses he changed was the following:

﴿ وَٱلسَّارِقُ وَٱلسَّارِقَةُ فَٱقْطَعُوٓاْ أَيْدِيَهُمَا جَزَآءًۢ بِمَا كَسَبَا نَكَٰلًا مِّنَ ٱللَّهِ ۗ وَٱللَّهُ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ ﴾

"And (as for) the man who steals and the woman who steals, cut off their hands as a punishment for what they have earned, an exemplary punishment from Allah; and Allah is Mighty, Wise."[1]

Herein, he replaced the word *aydiyahumā* (their hands) with *aymānahumā* (their right hands). He did this because he believed the verse was too vague and because it did not specify which of the two hands of a thief were to be cut off. Similarly, in the following verse:

﴿ وَأَقِيمُواْ ٱلْوَزْنَ بِٱلْقِسْطِ وَلَا تُخْسِرُواْ ٱلْمِيزَانَ ﴾

"And keep up the balance with equity and do not make the measure deficient."[2]

He added the phrase *billisāni* (by the tongue) after the word *alwazna* (weight) because, in his belief, the honest measurement of weights was an issue concerned with the tongue of a balancing instrument. In another verse:

﴿ فَكُلِى وَٱشْرَبِى وَقَرِّى عَيْنًا ۖ فَإِمَّا تَرَيِنَّ مِنَ ٱلْبَشَرِ أَحَدًا فَقُولِىٓ إِنِّى نَذَرْتُ لِلرَّحْمَٰنِ صَوْمًا فَلَنْ أُكَلِّمَ ٱلْيَوْمَ إِنسِيًّا ﴾

"So eat and drink and refresh the eye. Then if you see any mortal, say: Surely I have vowed a fast to the Beneficent Allah, so I shall not speak to any man today."[3]

He added the word *ṣamtan* (in terms of silence). He did this in order to clarify that the fast being spoken of here was a fast of silence and abstinence from speech.[4]

6. He would include in-line exegetic notes into the text of the Holy Qur'ān. However, additions of this sort were common within the works of classical scholars. These additions were such that they did not create confusion with

1. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Mā'idah (5:38).
2. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Raḥmān (55:9).
3. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah Maryam (19:26).
4. ***Tafsīr al-Ṭabarsī***, vol. 8, pg. 421; ***Tafsīr al-Kashshāf***, vol. 1, pg. 459; Ghazzālī al-, Abū-Ḥāmid, ***Iḥyā' ʿUlūm al-Dīn***, vol. 2, pg. 77; Dhahabī al-, Shams al-Dīn, ***Tadhkirat al-Ḥuffāẓ***, vol. 1, pg. 340; ***al-Itqān***, vol. 1, pg. 47; ***Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī***, vol. 6, pg. 228.

regard to the actual revealed text. An example is the following verse:

﴿ كَانَ ٱلنَّاسُ أُمَّةً وَٰحِدَةً فَبَعَثَ ٱللَّهُ ٱلنَّبِيِّـۧنَ مُبَشِّرِينَ وَمُنذِرِينَ وَأَنزَلَ مَعَهُمُ ٱلْكِتَٰبَ بِٱلْحَقِّ لِيَحْكُمَ بَيْنَ ٱلنَّاسِ فِيمَا ٱخْتَلَفُوا۟ فِيهِ ۚ وَمَا ٱخْتَلَفَ فِيهِ إِلَّا ٱلَّذِينَ أُوتُوهُ مِنۢ بَعْدِ مَا جَآءَتْهُمُ ٱلْبَيِّنَٰتُ بَغْيًۢا بَيْنَهُمْ ۖ فَهَدَى ٱللَّهُ ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا۟ لِمَا ٱخْتَلَفُوا۟ فِيهِ مِنَ ٱلْحَقِّ بِإِذْنِهِۦ ۗ وَٱللَّهُ يَهْدِى مَن يَشَآءُ إِلَىٰ صِرَٰطٍ مُّسْتَقِيمٍ ﴾

"(All) people are a single nation; so Allah raised prophets as bearers of good news and as warners, and He revealed with them the Book with truth, that it might judge between people in that in which they differed; and none but the very people who were given it differed about it after clear arguments had come to them, revolting among themselves; so Allah has guided by His will those who believe to the truth about which they differed and Allah guides whom He pleases to the right path."[1]

Herein, he added the word *ikhtalafū* (they disagreed) after the phrase *'ummatan wāḥidatan* (a single nation) so as to clarify that successive prophets were sent by God due to disagreements that had erupted in between nations.[2] Al-Suyūṭī, quoting from Ibn Mardawayh, reports that Ibn Masʿūd used to say, "In the time of the Holy Prophet (ṣ), we would recite verse 67 of Sūrah al-Mā'idah in the following manner: "O Apostle! Deliver that which has been revealed to you from your Lord [*That ʿAlī is the leader of the believers*]; and if you do not, then you have not delivered His message, and Allah will protect you from the people; surely Allah will not guide the unbelieving nation."[3] Instances of this sort were quite frequent in the codex of Ibn Masʿūd.

Questions are often raised with regard to such additions, especially in that they constitute a form of textual perversion or alteration of divine revelation. In answer to this, we can say that many such narrations regarding the codex of Ibn Masʿūd are, in fact, defamatory falsifications motivated by political intent. Ibn Masʿūd's opposition to the rulers of his time caused him to fall from favor amongst their supporters. Secondly, as a general rule, such exegetic additions were commonplace amongst the companions. They incorporated them in order to illuminate the correct meanings of Qur'ānic verses. They believed that in this manner, any learner seeking to memorize the Qur'ān would automatically be made aware of its correct interpretations

1. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Baqarah (2:213).
2. ***Tafsīr al-Kashshāf***, vol. 1, pg. 255.
3. ***al-Durr al-Manthūr***, vol. 2, pg. 298.

as well.[1]

The Codex of Ubayy ibn Kaʿb

The salient features of this codex were as follows:

1. The sequence of chapters was almost the same as that of Ibn Masʿūd's codex, although there were a few minor differences. He had placed Sūrah al-Anfāl after Sūrah Yūnus, but before Sūrah al-Tawbah. A few other differences regarding the placement of individual chapters, similar to the one we mentioned above, were also present within this manuscript. Another key distinction was that his codex included Sūrah al-Fātiḥah, Sūrah al-Falaq and Sūrah al-Nās.

2. This particular codex included two additional chapters not found in any other codex of the Holy Qur'ān. These two chapters were titled *al-khalʿ* and *al-ḥafd*. In reality, they were supplications recited during the Muslim ritual prayer, and were mistakenly taken by Ubayy to be chapters of the Holy Qur'ān.[2]

The supplication of *al-khalʿ* reads:[3]

بِسْمِ اللهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ. اللَّهُمَّ إِنَّا نَسْتَعِينُ بِكَ وَنَسْتَغْفِرُكَ وَنُثْنِي عَلَيْكَ الْخَيْرَ وَلاَ نَكْفُرُكَ وَنَخْلَعُ وَنَتْرُكُ مَنْ يَفْجُرُكَ

The supplication of *al-ḥafd* reads:[4]

بِسْمِ اللهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ. اللَّهُمَّ إِيَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ وَلَكَ نُصَلِّي وَنَسْجُدُ وَإِلَيْكَ نَسْعَى وَنَحْفُدُ، نَخْشَى عَذَابَكَ وَنَرْجُو رَحْتَمَكَ إِنَّ عَذَابَكَ بِالْكُفَّارِ مُلْحَقٌ

3. In this codex, Sūrah al-Fīl and Sūrah Quraysh were not separated by a *basmalah,* and were treated as one chapter.[5] In the traditions of the Ahl al-Bayt, we find that if these chapters are recited during prayer, the worshipper

1. ***al-Tamhīd***, vol. 1, pg. 320-322.
2. ***al-Itqān***, vol. 1, pg. 65.
3. In the Name of Allah; the All-beneficent, the All-merciful. O Allah, we do seek help from You, implore Your forgiveness, and commend You for all prosperity that You only grant; and we never show ingratitude to You; rather, we quit and desert every one who may disbelief in You.
4. In the Name of Allah; the All-beneficent, the All-merciful. O Allah, we do worship You alone and to You alone do we pray and prostrate, and to You alone do we come and hurry. We fear Your chastisement and hope for Your mercy. Verily, Your chastisement will unavoidably befall the disbelievers.
5. Ibid, vol. 1, pg. 64-65.

is not allowed to recite one without the other. However, these traditions dictate that, even when recited together during prayer, the two chapters are to be separated by a *basmalah* in between.[1] This leads us to believe that, in terms of recitation, these two chapters are, in effect, one; but, in terms of their placement within the Holy Qur'ān, they represent two separate chapters. This is contrary to the apparent belief held by Ubayy Ibn Kaʿb. Nevertheless, due to this, Ubayy's codex comprised of 116 chapters.

4. In this codex, Sūrah al-Zumar began with the disconnected letters Ḥā-Mīm. Thus, this chapter was included in a collection of chapters collectively known as the Ḥawāmīm, bringing the total of such chapters to eight instead of seven.[2]

5. The codex in question was different, in terms of words and verses, from that which was commonly and popularly known to be divine revelation. In some places synonyms were used instead of original words.

﴿قَالُواْ يَـٰوَيْلَنَا مَنۢ بَعَثَنَا مِن مَّرْقَدِنَا ۜ هَـٰذَا مَا وَعَدَ ٱلرَّحْمَـٰنُ وَصَدَقَ ٱلْمُرْسَلُونَ﴾

"They shall say: O woe to us! who has raised us up from our sleeping-place? This is what the Beneficent Allah promised and the apostles told the truth."[3]

In this verse, the word *baʿathnā* (has awoken us) had been replaced with its equal *habbanā*.[4]

Similarly:

﴿ يَكَادُ ٱلْبَرْقُ يَخْطَفُ أَبْصَـٰرَهُمْ ۖ كُلَّمَآ أَضَآءَ لَهُم مَّشَوْاْ فِيهِ وَإِذَآ أَظْلَمَ عَلَيْهِمْ قَامُواْ ۚ وَلَوْ شَآءَ ٱللَّهُ لَذَهَبَ بِسَمْعِهِمْ وَأَبْصَـٰرِهِمْ ۚ إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَىْءٍ قَدِيرٌ﴾

"The lightning almost takes away their sight; whenever it shines on them they walk in it, and when it becomes dark to them they stand still; and if Allah had pleased He would certainly have taken away their hearing and their sight; surely Allah has power over all things."[5]

The word *mashaw* (they walk) was replaced by its synonym *marrū*, or according to some other reports, *saʿaw*.[6]

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1. ***Wasā'il al-Shīʿah***, vol. 4, Chapters regarding recitation in prayer, Chapter 10.
2. ***Al-Itqān***, vol. 1, pg. 64.
3. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah Yāsīn (36:52).
4. ***Tafsīr al-Ṭabarsī***, vol. 8, pg. 428.
5. The Holy Qur'ān, al-Baqarah (2:20).
6. ***al-Itqān***, vol. 1, pg. 47.

Some other words had been added for the sake of explanation. In the following verse:

﴿ وَأَتِمُّواْ ٱلۡحَجَّ وَٱلۡعُمۡرَةَ لِلَّهِۚ فَإِنۡ أُحۡصِرۡتُمۡ فَمَا ٱسۡتَيۡسَرَ مِنَ ٱلۡهَدۡيِۖ وَلَا تَحۡلِقُواْ رُءُوسَكُمۡ حَتَّىٰ يَبۡلُغَ ٱلۡهَدۡيُ مَحِلَّهُۥۚ فَمَن كَانَ مِنكُم مَّرِيضًا أَوۡ بِهِۦٓ أَذٗى مِّن رَّأۡسِهِۦ فَفِدۡيَةٞ مِّن صِيَامٍ أَوۡ صَدَقَةٍ أَوۡ نُسُكٖۚ فَإِذَآ أَمِنتُمۡ فَمَن تَمَتَّعَ بِٱلۡعُمۡرَةِ إِلَى ٱلۡحَجِّ فَمَا ٱسۡتَيۡسَرَ مِنَ ٱلۡهَدۡيِۚ فَمَن لَّمۡ يَجِدۡ فَصِيَامُ ثَلَٰثَةِ أَيَّامٖ فِي ٱلۡحَجِّ وَسَبۡعَةٍ إِذَا رَجَعۡتُمۡۗ تِلۡكَ عَشَرَةٞ كَامِلَةٞۗ ذَٰلِكَ لِمَن لَّمۡ يَكُنۡ أَهۡلُهُۥ حَاضِرِي ٱلۡمَسۡجِدِ ٱلۡحَرَامِۚ وَٱتَّقُواْ ٱللَّهَ وَٱعۡلَمُوٓاْ أَنَّ ٱللَّهَ شَدِيدُ ٱلۡعِقَابِ ﴾

"And accomplish the pilgrimage and the visit for Allah, but if, you are prevented, (send) whatever offering is easy to obtain, and do not shave your heads until the offering reaches its destination; but whoever among you is sick or has an ailment of the head, he (should effect) a compensation by fasting or alms or sacrificing, then when you are secure, whoever profits by combining the visit with the pilgrimage (should take) what offering is easy to obtain; but he who cannot find (any offering) should fast for three days during the pilgrimage and for seven days when you return; these (make) ten (days) complete; this is for him whose family is not present in the Sacred Mosque, and be careful (of your duty) to Allah, and know that Allah is severe in requiting (evil)."[1]

He added the word *mutatābiʿāt* (consecutive) right after the mention of the three day fast,[2] so as to clarify that this fast was to be completed in three successive days. Then in another verse:

﴿ وَٱلۡمُحۡصَنَٰتُ مِنَ ٱلنِّسَآءِ إِلَّا مَا مَلَكَتۡ أَيۡمَٰنُكُمۡۖ كِتَٰبَ ٱللَّهِ عَلَيۡكُمۡۚ وَأُحِلَّ لَكُم مَّا وَرَآءَ ذَٰلِكُمۡ أَن تَبۡتَغُواْ بِأَمۡوَٰلِكُم مُّحۡصِنِينَ غَيۡرَ مُسَٰفِحِينَۚ فَمَا ٱسۡتَمۡتَعۡتُم بِهِۦ مِنۡهُنَّ فَـَٔاتُوهُنَّ أُجُورَهُنَّ فَرِيضَةٗۚ وَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيۡكُمۡ فِيمَا تَرَٰضَيۡتُم بِهِۦ مِنۢ بَعۡدِ ٱلۡفَرِيضَةِۚ إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ كَانَ عَلِيمًا حَكِيمٗا ﴾

"And all married women except those whom your right hands possess (this is) Allah's ordinance to you, and lawful for you are (all women) besides those, provided that you seek (them) with your property, taking (them) in marriage not committing fornication. Then as to those whom you profit by, give them their dowries as appointed; and there is no blame on you about what you mutually agree after what

1. The Holy Qur'ān, al-Baqarah (2:196).
2. ***Al-Kashshāf***, vol. 1, pg. 242.

is appointed; surely Allah is Knowing, Wise."[1]

The words *ilā ajalim musamman* (till a specific time) were added after the phrase, *"Then as to those whom you profit by."* This was done to specify that the verse spoke of temporary marriage, and permanent marriage, in this particular section of Qur'ānic text.[2]

﴿ إِنَّ ٱلسَّاعَةَ ءَاتِيَةٌ أَكَادُ أُخۡفِيهَا لِتُجۡزَىٰ كُلُّ نَفۡسِۭ بِمَا تَسۡعَىٰ ﴾

"Surely the hour is coming-- I am about to make it manifest-- so that every soul may be rewarded as it strives:"[3]

In the above verse, he placed the phrase *min nafsī fakayfa uẓhirukum ʿalayhā* (from Myself; so how shall they be made manifest to it) after the word *ukhfīhā*.[4]

Similar to what we explained with regard to Ibn Masʿūd's codex, these additions were in no way indicative of textual perversion, nor were they a threat to the purity of the Holy Qur'ān. However, later on, such a practice was discarded altogether.

Little Known Codices

In books, written about the multiple recitations that were in place with regard to Qur'ānic texts, we find that most such disagreements were a result of differences that existed in the individual codices of the companions. That is why, during ʿUthmān's reign, the state took it upon itself to create a unified official codex of the Holy Qur'ān, and confiscated all other codices in circulation. These confiscated codices were destroyed to extinguish the very source of the ongoing conflict. Ibn al-Khaṭīb remarks, "The contrasting recitations narrated from first century individuals, as well as the companions, are in accordance with what existed in the numerous codices of the Holy Qur'ān present at that time."[5] Below, we shall shed light on some of these little known codices.

1. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Nisā' (4:24).
2. ***Jāmiʿ Al-BayānTafsīr al-Ṭabarī***, vol. 5, pg. 9.
3. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah Ṭā-Hā (20:15).
4. Ibn Khawlawayh, ***Shawādhdh al-Qirā'ā t***, pg. 87.
5. ***Al-Furqān fi Jamʿi wa-Tadwīn al-Qur'ān***, pg. 110.

Mainstream Recitation	*ʿĀ'ishah's Codex*
حَافِظُوا عَلَى الصَّلَوَاتِ وَالصَّلَاةِ الْوُسْطَى	حَافِظُوا عَلَى الصَّلَوَاتِ وَالصَّلَاةِ الْوُسْطَى وصلاة العصر
إِنْ يَدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِهِ إِلَّا إِنَاثًا	إِنْ يَدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِهِ إِلَّا اوثاناً...
إِنَّكُمْ وَمَا تَعْبُدُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ حَصَبُ جَهَنَّمَ	إِنَّكُمْ وَمَا تَعْبُدُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ حَطَبُ جَهَنَّمَ
إِذْ تَلَقَّوْنَهُ	إِذْ تَلَقَوْنَهُ
وَالَّذِينَ يُؤْتُونَ مَا آتَوا وَقُلُوبُهُمْ وَجِلَةٌ	وَالَّذِينَ يأْتُونَ مَا آتَوا وَقُلُوبُهُمْ وَجِلَةٌ
إِنَّ اللَّهَ وَمَلَائِكَتَهُ يُصَلُّونَ عَلَى النَّبِيِّ يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا صَلُّوا عَلَيْهِ وَسَلِّمُوا تَسْلِيمًا	إِنَّ اللَّهَ وَمَلَائِكَتَهُ يُصَلُّونَ عَلَى النَّبِيِّ يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا صَلُّوا عَلَيْهِ وَسَلِّمُوا تَسْلِيمًا وَّعَلَى الَّذِيْنَ يَصَلُّونَ الصُّفُوفَ الْأُوَّلَ
Mainstream Recitation	***The Codex of Muʿādh ibn Jabl***
هَلْ يَنظُرُونَ إِلَّا أَنْ يَأْتِيَهُمْ اللَّهُ فِي ظُلَلٍ مِنْ الْغَمَامِ وَالْمَلَائِكَةُ وَقُضِيَ الْأَمْرُ	هَلْ يَنظُرُونَ إِلَّا أَنْ يَأْتِيَهُمْ اللَّهُ فِي ظُلَلٍ مِنْ الْغَمَامِ وَالْمَلَائِكَةُ وَقَضاء الْأَمْرُ
وَمَنْ يَكْسِبْ خَطِيئَةً	وَمَنْ يَكَسِّبْ خَطِيئَةً
إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَكْسِبونَ الإِثْمَ	إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَكَسِّبونَ الإِثْمَ
وَتَاللَّهِ لَأَكِيدَنَّ	وَباللهِ لَأَكِيدَنَّ
وَإِذَا أُلْقُوا مِنْهَا مَكَاناً ضَيِّقاً مُقَرَّنِينَ	وَإِذَا أُلْقُوا مِنْهَا مَكَاناً ضَيِّقاً مُقَرَّنونَ
يَا قَوْمِ اتَّبِعُونِي أَهْدِكُمْ سَبِيلَ الرَّشَادِ	يَا قَوْمِ اتَّبِعُونِي أَهْدِيكُمْ سَبِيلَ الرَّشَادِ
Mainstream Recitation	***The Codex of Abū-Dardā'***
لَوْ أَطَاعُونَا مَا قُتِلُوا	لَوْ أَطَاعُونَا مَا قُتِّلُوا
مِنْ بَعْدِ وَصِيَّةٍ يُوصِينَ بِهَا أَوْ دَيْنٍ	مِنْ بَعْدِ وَصِيَّةٍ يُوصَى بِهَا أَوْ دَيْنٍ
قَلِيلاً مَا تَذَكَّرُونَ	قَلِيلاً مَا تَتَذَكَّرُونَ
بِالْغُدُوِّ وَالْآصَالِ	بِالْغُدُوِّ وَالْإِيصَالِ
مَا كَانَ لِنَبِيٍّ أَنْ يَكُونَ لَهُ أَسْرَى	مَا كَانَ لِنَبِيٍّ أَنْ يَكُونَ لَهُ أَسْرَى
لِتُخْرِجَ النَّاسَ مِنَ الظُّلُمَاتِ إِلَى النُّورِ	لِيَخْرُجَ النَّاسُ مِنَ الظُّلُمَاتِ إِلَى النُّورِ
مَا كَانَ يَنْبَغِي لَنَا أَنْ نَتَّخِذَ مِنْ دُونِكَ مِنْ أَوْلِيَاءَ	مَا كَانَ يَنْبَغِي لَنَا أَنْ نَتَخِذَ مِنْ دُونِكَ مِنْ أَوْلِيَاءَ
مِنْ أَزْوَاجِنَا وَذُرِّيَّاتِنَا قُرَّةَ أَعْيُنٍ	مِنْ أَزْوَاجِنَا وَذُرِّيَّاتِنَا قُرَّاةَ أَعْيُنٍ
مَا أُخْفِيَ لَهُمْ مِنْ قُرَّةِ أَعْيُنٍ	مَا أُخْفِي لَهُمْ مِنْ قُرَّاةِ أَعْيُنٍ
مَا كَذَبَ الْفُؤَادُ مَا رَآى	مَا كَذَّبَ الْفُؤَادُ مَا رَآى
كَعَصْفٍ مَأْكُولٍ	كَعَصْفٍ مَاكُولٍ
Mainstream Recitation	***The Codex of ʿUthmān***
إِنَّ رَبَّكَ هُوَ الْخَلَّاقُ الْعَلِيمُ	إِنَّ رَبَّكَ هُوَ الْخَالِقُ الْعَلِيمُ
وَيُهَيِّئْ لَكُمْ مِنْ أَمْرِكُمْ مِرْفَقاً	وَيهيأْ لَكُمْ مِنْ أَمْرِكُمْ مِرْفَقاً
لِئَلاَّ يَعْلَمَ أَهْلُ الْكِتَابِ	لِكَيْلاَ يَعْلَمَ أَهْلُ الْكِتَابِ

وَإِنْ كَانَ ذُو عُسْرَةٍ فَنَظِرَةٌ إِلَى مَيْسَرَةٍ	وَإِنْ كَانَ ذَا عُسْرَةٍ فَنَظِرَةٌ إِلَى مَيْسَرَةٍ
وَإِنِّي خِفْتُ الْمَوَالِيَ مِنْ وَرَائِي	وَإِنِّي خَفَّتِ الْمَوَالِيَ مِنْ وَرَائِي
Mainstream Recitation	***The Codex of Anas ibn Mālik***
مَالِكِ يَوْمِ الدِّينِ	مَلِكِ يَوْمِ الدِّينِ
فَلاَ جُنَاحَ عَلَيْهِ أَنْ يَطَّوَّفَ بِهِمَا	فَلاَ جُنَاحَ عَلَيْهِ أَنْ لاَ يَطَّوَّفَ بِهِمَا
وَالْمُقِيمِينَ الصَّلاَةَ	وَالْمُقِيمُونَ الصَّلاَةَ
حَتَّى يَطْهُرْنَ فَإِذَا تَطَهَّرْنَ	حَتَّى يَتَطَهَّرْنَ فَإِذَا تَطَهَّرْنَ
كَشَجَرَةٍ طَيِّبَةٍ أَصْلُهَا ثَابِتٌ	كَشَجَرَةٍ طَيِّبَةٍ ثَابِتٌ أَصْلُهَا
إِنِّي نَذَرْتُ لِلرَّحْمَنِ صَوْماً	إِنِّي نَذَرْتُ لِلرَّحْمَنِ صَوْماً وَّصَمْتاً

The Unification of the Codices

As has already been mentioned, the era that followed immediately after the demise of the Holy Prophet (ṣ) was an era of compilation of the Holy Qur'ān. Many senior companions had focused their attentions upon this matter and were engaged in it according to the full extent of their knowledge and ability. Those capable of compiling a codex for themselves had taken steps to do so, while those unable to fulfill this task were turning towards others to achieve this goal. This second group would either have an existing codex copied or would get someone to compile an original codex for them. Thus, the number of codices, floating around in the expanding Muslim territories, became too large to keep track off. In fact, as the Muslim community grew, with the Qur'ān forming the core of all its spiritual and temporal bindings, the need for new codices grew with it.

Some of these codices, considering the great respect that their compilers commanded within Muslim society, became extremely important and influential. Such codices included the codex of ʿAbdullāh ibn Masʿūd, a renowned senior companion of the Holy Prophet (ṣ) to whom the people of al-Kūfah[1] referred when seeking guidance in religious matters. Another such codex was that of Ubayy ibn Kaʿb, this manuscript enjoyed the trust of the people of al-Madīnah. Yet another codex was that of Abū-Mūsā al-Ashʿarī which commanded respect in al-Baṣrah. Similarly, the codex of al-Miqdād ibn al-Aswad had gain repute in Damascus.

The Conflict caused by the Codices

The compilers of these numerous codices were also numerous. In addition to this fact, there existed no communication between these people; each carrying out his individual task in complete isolation from the other.

1. In those days, the city of al-Kūfah had become the center of Islamic learning.

Furthermore, their individual abilities and levels of knowledge about the Qur'ān also varied enormously. All this led to the appearance of sometimes great differences between the codices they compiled.

These differences had, slowly but surely, turned into a source of conflict and friction between ordinary people. Muslims from different Islamic territories carried with themselves varying prejudices and unique interpretations born of the codices that they held to be trustworthy. These people would occasionally gather in one place due to an ongoing military campaign, or other similar reasons. There, the full extent of the friction created by this codical multiplicity would come to light. It was not uncommon for heated debates to turn into wrangling and, later on, escalate into situations much worse.

Some historical examples, concerning the pivotal issues around which most prejudices and conflicts revolved, are as follows:

1. While they were returning, alongside the Muslim army, from a campaign in Armenia, Ḥudhayfah said to Saʿīd ibn al-ʿĀṣ, "I have witnessed an issue which, if left unresolved, threatens the unity of our people with regard to the Holy Qur'ān. If this unity were to be lost, the damage would indeed be irreparable."

Upon hearing this, Saʿīd asked, "What is this matter?"

Ḥudhayfah explained, "I saw people from the territory of Ḥimṣ who believed that their manner of reciting the Qur'ān was the best from amongst all recitations. They have learnt the Qur'ān from al-Miqdād. While another group, those from Damascus, held that their recitation was the best. Yet another group, from amongst the people of al-Kūfah, recite the Qur'ān according to the style and understanding of Ibn Masʿūd and believe it to be the best. Similarly, the people of al-Baṣrah follow the recitation of Abū-Mūsā al-Ashʿarī and call his codex *lubāb al-qulūb* (nectar of the heart)."

Upon returning to al-Kūfah, Ḥudhayfah discussed this matter with the people. He gathered a considerable number of supporters from amongst the companions and the first generation disciples. Those who followed the recitational style of Ibn Masʿūd disagreed with Ḥudhayfah and questioned his opposition of their methods. He became angry and told them to be silent, swearing that he would take the said matter to the caliph, ʿUthmān, so that a resolution could be found. On meeting Ibn Masʿūd, Ḥudhayfah sought to inform him of the issue, but was met with a stern reaction. This angered Saʿīd greatly and he walked out of the meeting. The people followed suit and

Ḥudhayfah, decided to leave for al-Madīnah to see the caliph.[1]

2. Yazīd al-Nakhaʿī reports, "During the governorship of al-Walīd ibn ʿUqbah, appointed by ʿUthmān during his caliphate, I saw the people gathered in the mosque at al-Kūfah. Ḥudhayfah ibn al-Yamān was also in the midst of this group. I heard someone call out, 'All those who follow the recitation of Abū-Mūsā al-Ashʿarī, must gather together in a section of the mosque that lies near the door of Kindah, and those who follow the recitation of Ibn Masʿūd, must gather near the house of ʿAbdullāh.' The two groups had disagreed about the correct recitation of verse 196 of Sūrah al-Baqarah. One group claimed its recitation to be this:

وَأَتِمُّوا الْحَجَّ وَالْعُمْرَةَ لِلَّهِ

'And complete the Ḥajj or ʿUmrah in the service of Allah'

While the other insisted upon this version:

وَأَتِمُّوا الْحَجَّ وَالْعُمْرَةَ لِلْبَيْتِ

'And complete the Ḥajj or ʿUmrah of the house'

This division had made Ḥudhayfah extremely angry. He declared, 'Were not these differences present before your time?' He then proposed that the matter be taken up with ʿUthmān.

In a tradition narrated by Ibn Abi'l-Shaʿhā', Ḥudhayfah is reported to have said, "(You speak of) the recitation of Ibn Ummi-ʿAbd! (You talk of) the recitation of Abū-Mūsā al-Ashʿarī! I swear by God that if I live to see the caliph, I shall convince him to arrange for a single recitation."

Upon hearing this, Ibn Masʿūd became angry and declared, "These are hard words you speak!" Ḥudhayfah, thus, became silent.

In another tradition, we find Ḥudhayfah speaking thus, "The people of al-Kūfah say, 'The recitation of Ibn Masʿūd (is correct)', while the people of al-Baṣrah insist, 'The recitation of Abū-Mūsā (is correct).' I swear by God that if I am able to reach the caliph, I shall have him drown these conflicting codices." To this, ʿAbdullāh replied, "And if you do so, God will drown you in a place other than water (i.e. in hell)."[2]

Ibn Ḥajar reports, "'Abdullāh ibn Masʿūd said to Ḥudhayfah, 'I have been told that you said so and so (that you seek to speak to the caliph regarding the multiplicity of recitations).' To which Ḥudhayfah replied, 'Yes, it is true. I do not want the people to be preoccupied by this recitation and that. Such a

1. ***Al-Kāmil fi'l-Tārīkh***, vol. 3, pg. 111.
2. Al-Sajistānī, ***al-Maṣāḥif***, pg. 11-14.

state would only lead to disagreements, like those seen amongst the People of the Book (the Jews, Christians and Sabians).'"[1]

3. Ibn al-Ashtah narrates from Anas ibn Mālik that, during ʿUthmān's reign, the people of al-Kūfah had become severely entangled in disagreements regarding the correct recitation of the Holy Qur'ān. Some Qur'ānic teachers would teach the Qur'ān according the recitational style of one of the available codices, while the other would teach it in accordance with another such codex. This resulted in the creation of quarrels and rivalries amongst the youth of the city. If the problem were presented to the said teachers themselves, they would simply reject the opposing recitation, proclaiming their own style to be the only correct one available. When ʿUthmān ibn ʿAffān came to know of this predicament, he declared, "Do you falsify the Qur'ān and recite it incorrectly, while I still live? Indeed, those who fail to assist me in the rectification of this wrong shall render themselves guilty of a far more heinous mistake."[2]

4. Muḥammad ibn Sīrīn is narrated to have said, "There were those who would recite the Qur'ān with a particular recitation, while others believed their recitations to be wrong. News of this reached ʿUthmān and he associated great importance to it, forming a committee of twelve migrants and helpers (to sort out the issue in question)."[3]

5. Bukayr al-Ashajj reports that the people of Iraq found each other's recitations unacceptable. A person would ask another to recite a verse, and upon hearing the latter's recitation, would declare, "This recitation is not admissible!" The situation remained such, until the matter was finally referred to ʿUthmān.[4]

If it were not for the wisdom of people like Ḥudhayfah ibn al-Yamān, these disagreements would have spiraled out of control, finally escalating to a stage where they would have threatened the very unity of the Muslim nation.

Ḥudhayfah's Arrival in al-Madīnah

When Ḥudhayfah returned from the military campaign in Armenia, he witnessed grave disagreements in amongst the people of al-Kūfah regarding the correct recitation of the Holy Qur'ān. Distressed by this situation, he gathered all the Prophet's companions present in the city and discussed the issue with them. Ḥudhayfah was of the opinion that ʿUthmān, the caliph in al-Madīnah, should take steps in order to unify the codices and,

1. ***Fatḥ al-Bārī***, vol. 9, pg. 15.
2. ***al-Itqān***, vol. 1, pg. 59. al-Sajistānī, ***al-Maṣāḥif***, pg. 21.
3. ***al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā***, vol. 3, pg. 62. al-Sajistānī, ***al-Maṣāḥif***, pg. 25.
4. ***Fatḥ al-Bārī***, vol. 9, pg. 16.

subsequently, should force the Muslim nation to adhere to one official recitation. All the companions, except for ʿAbdullāh ibn Masʿūd, agreed with Ḥudhayfah's views[1]. Therefore, with the utmost of haste, he travelled to al-Madīnah to warn the caliph about the problem at hand before it became pandemic throughout the Ummah.

Ḥudhayfah told ʿUthmān, "I warn you, with complete seriousness and without any euphemisms, that the nation is threatened by the same problem that plagues the Jews and the Christian!"

ʿUthmān asked, "What is this matter that you speak of?"

With the caliph's attention fully grabbed, Ḥudhayfah continued, "I was present in the war of Armenia. There I saw people from Syria who recited the Qur'ān according to that which is found in the codex of Ubayy ibn Kaʿb, and in doing so, they would recite pieces never heard of before by the people of Iraq. Likewise, the people of Iraq would recite the Qur'ān according to the codex of ʿAbdullāh ibn Masʿūd, upon which the people of Syria would display a similar reaction. Each group, therefore, accused the other of blasphemy."[2]

ʿUthmān's Consultation with the Companions of the Prophet (ṣ)

The matter at hand, due to the negative results it promised to generate, drew the caliph towards taking immediate and serious steps necessary for the resolution of the said issue. The problem itself was unprecedented, and the solution it demanded was also something never attempted before by any of ʿUthmān's predecessors. It was clear that colossal hurdles existed in the path of a successful resolution. Apart from this, the codices themselves were not limited in number, but were, in fact, numerous and widely scattered throughout the Muslim territories. What made things worse was that many of these codices had staunch supporters among the Prophet's companions. The opinion of these individuals could not be ignored, especially with the amount of influence they commanded within Muslim society. If the government were to change the status quo with regard to these codices, a severe reaction from these individuals could very well be expected. In view of these dangers, ʿUthmān decided to consult the companions, present in al-Madīnah, before beginning any definite action. The unanimous view of the companions was that the issue's gravity dictated prompt and decisive implementation, no matter what the cost. Ibn al-Athīr reports, "ʿUthmān gathered the companions and made them abreast about the issue at hand.

1. ***Al-Kāmil fi'l-Tārīkh***, vol. 3, pg. 111.
2. ***Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī***, vol. 6, pg. 225; al-Sajistānī, ***al-Maṣāḥif,*** pg. 19-20; ***al-Kāmil fi'l-Tārīkh***, vol. 3, pg. 111.

This resulted in a consensus that affirmed Ḥudhayfah's views."[1]

The Committee In-charge of the Codical Unification

ʿUthmān acted swiftly in response to this issue. He made a public announcement calling upon all companions to aid him in the resolution of this problem.[2] Then, he chose four people, from amongst his trusted acquaintances, in order to put his plans into effect. These four people were Zayd ibn Thābit from amongst the Anṣār, and Saʿīd ibn al-ʿĀṣ, ʿAbdullāh ibn al-Zubayr and ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn al-Ḥārith ibn Hishām from amongst the people of Quraysh. They formed the core committee in-charge of unifying the codices[3] with Zayd as their leader. ʿAbdullāh ibn Masʿūd was strongly opposed to Zayd's nomination. He openly declared, "They have set me aside while handing over this responsibility to a man who, I swear by God, was still an infidel within his mother's womb when I embraced Islam."[4] Based on such opposition, ʿUthmān decided to become the head of this committee himself.[5] The said committee, however, were not capable of completing the task at hand. They lacked the necessary qualifications and needed help from individuals who held the relevant expertise. Therefore, they sought assistance from Ubayy ibn Kaʿb, Mālik ibn Abī-ʿĀmir, Kuthayr ibn Aflaḥ, Anas ibn Mālik, ʿAbdullāh Ibn ʿAbbās, al-Musayyab ibn Saʿd[6], ʿAbdullāh ibn Fāṭimah[7] and, according to some traditions, Ibn Sīrīn, Ibn Saʿd and a few others. This consultative body comprised of twelve persons in total.[8]

During the first round of their work, Ubayy ibn Kaʿb was selected as the head of this gathering. According to the narration of Abū'l-ʿĀliyah, "They used the codex of Ubayy ibn Kaʿb as a corner stone for their work, compiling the Holy Qur'ān based upon this particular manuscript. Ubayy ibn Kaʿb would dictate, while the rest would promptly write."[9]

Ibn Ḥajar writes, "It seems that, in the beginning, the whole task was being performed by Zayd and Saʿīd alone. ʿUthmān had asked them, 'Who from amongst you two is better in writing?' They replied that Zayd was more proficient in this matter. Then ʿUthmān went on to ask, 'And which one of

1. ***Al-Kāmil fi'l-Tārīkh***, vol. 3, pg. 111.
2. ***Al-Itqān***, vol. 1, pg. 59; al-Sajistānī, ***al-Maṣāḥif***, pg. 21.
3. ***Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī***, vol. 6, pg. 226.
4. ***Fatḥ al-Bārī*** vol. 9, pg. 17; al-Sajistānī, ***al-Maṣāḥif***, pg. 15.
5. Al-Sajistānī, ***al-Maṣāḥif***, pg. 25.
6. ***Irshād al-Sārī***, vol. 7, pg. 449.
7. Al-Sajistānī, ***al-Maṣāḥif***, pg. 33.
8. Ibid. (Also refer to: Ibn Saʿd, ***al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā***, vol. 3, Section. 2, pg. 62).
9. Al-Sajistānī, ***al-Maṣāḥif***, pg. 30.

you is more eloquent and correct in his speech?' They responded that Saʿīd held the upper hand in this particular area. Thus, Zayd was made responsible for writing and Saʿīd was given the job of dictation.[1] Later on, they realized that just one copy of the Holy Qur'ān would not suffice. They needed several copies of this new codex so that they could be sent to all four corners of the Muslim state. Thus, they employed more people as scribes and, subsequently, Ubayy ibn Kaʿb was entrusted with the task of dictation."[2]

The Reaction of the Companions in Response to Codical Unification

As has already been mentioned, Ḥudhayfah ibn al-Yamān was the person who pioneered the idea of codical unification for the Holy Qur'ān. It was he, who convinced the caliph to institute efforts so that only a single, official, recitation of the Holy Qur'ān could be made common amongst the people.[3] It was he who sat in consul with the companions in al-Kūfah and, with the exception of ʿAbdullāh ibn Masʿūd, won their unanimous support on this issue. In turn, ʿUthmān called upon the Prophet's companions in al-Madīnah to sit in consultation with him to ponder upon Ḥudhayfah's proposals. They, too, agreed unanimously with the plan he had put forward. Similarly, Imam ʿAlī's principle stand with regard to this matter was also positive. Ibn Abī-Dāwūd narrates, upon the authority of Suwayd ibn Ghaflah, that ʿAlī (ʿa) proclaimed, "By God, ʿUthmān did not carry out a single act in relation to the codices, except that he consulted us first. He sought our advice with respect to the various recitations, saying, 'I have been told that some say, 'what I recite is better than what you recite!' whereas this kind of talk resembles blasphemy.' Upon hearing this, I asked him what he thought of the matter. ʿUthmān replied, 'I believe that the people should have only one codex at their disposal, and that there should not exist any disagreement or division concerning this issue'. Therefore, I responded, 'I believe this to be an acceptable opinion.'"[4]

In another tradition, we find Imam ʿAlī (ʿa) saying, "If the matter of the codices had been referred to me, I too, would have acted as ʿUthmān did."[5]

Even during the time of his own caliphate, Imam ʿAlī (ʿa) insisted that the people adhere to the ʿUthmānic codex, without fail. He instructed them to strictly refrain from introducing any changes to its text, even though he knew

1. ***Fatḥ al-Bārī***, vol. 9, pg. 16.
2 . ***Fatḥ al-Bārī***, vol. 9, pg. 16; Ibn Saʿd, ***al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā***, vol. 3, Section. 2, pg. 62. Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, ***Tahdhīb al-Tahdhīb fi Asmā' al-Rijāl***, vol. 1, pg. 187.
3. ***Fatḥ al-Bārī,*** vol. 9, pg. 15.
4. ***Al-Itqān***, vol. 1, pg. 59.
5. Ibn al-Jazrī, ***Al-Nashr fi'l-Qirā'āt al-ʿAshr***, vol. 1, pg. 8.

that it contained several spelling mistakes. He instituted this policy to stop malicious individuals from corrupting the Qur'ān's text on the pretext of carrying out "corrections." Therefore, He exhorted the people to stay clear of tampering with the Holy Qur'ān.

It has been narrated that Imam ʿAlī (ʿa) once heard someone reciting the Holy Qur'ān. Upon reaching verse 29 of Sūrah al-Wāqiʿah, this person uttered the following words:

﴿ وَطَلۡحٖ مَّنضُودٖ ﴾

"And banana-trees (with fruits), one above another"[1]

Having heard this, Imam ʿAlī (ʿa) murmured to himself, "Why say *ṭalḥin* (meaning 'banana trees with fruit') when the correct word is *ṭalʿin* (meaning 'spathes near breaking with the weight of fruit')." He was of this opinion since the Qur'ān uses the latter of the two words in verse 148 of Sūrah al-Shuʿarā' when it says, "*... and date-palms with spathes near breaking (with the weight of fruit).*"[2] However, Imam ʿAlī's words did not constitute an objection, nor did he intend that a correction be made to the text. We know this to be true because when asked explicitly about the matter, Imam ʿAlī (ʿa) reacted with surprise and declared with the utmost certitude, "From today onwards no change must occur in the Qur'ān."[3]

The Standpoint of the Immaculate Imams in Defense of the Official Codex

A person recited a word from the Holy Qur'ān, while in the presence of Imam al-Ṣādiq (ʿa), in a manner different from what the people would normally recite. Promptly, the Imam (ʿa) responded, "Do not recite this word like this ever again! Recite it in the way everyone else recites it." On another occasion, when replying to a question regarding the correct recitation of the Holy Qur'ān, Imam al-Ṣādiq (ʿa) said, "Recite the Qur'ān as you have learnt it (i.e. in accordance with the recitation that is common throughout the Muslim community)."[4]

Based on these facts, it is the unanimous opinion of all Shīʿah scholars that the Holy Qur'ān, as we have it today, is indeed the complete and correct

1. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Wāqiʿah (56:29).
2. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Shuʿarā' (26:148).
3. ***Jāmiʿ Al-BayānTafsīr al-Ṭabarī***, vol.27, pg.104; ***Tafsīr al-Ṭabarsī***, vol.9, pg.218.
4. ***Wasā'il al-Shīʿah***, vol. 4, The chapter concerning the recitation of the Holy Qur'ān.

Qur'ān.[1] Never has the book undergone any distortions or perversions. Similarly, the recitation that is common and popular today is indeed the correct recitation, and its utilization is universally admissible. Prayers conducted, using this particular recitation, are valid under Islamic law and completely unimpeachable. It is indeed the same recitation as the one revealed to the Prophet Muḥammad (ṣ) by God, Himself.

We believe that even Ibn Masʿūd's opposition was not in protest against the core principle of codical unification. His anger and criticism revolved around the people chosen to carry out this humungous task. He understood them to be unqualified and considered himself more deserving of the position. Therefore, we find him saying, "These are men who have no right to meddle with the Holy Qur'ān."[2] As a result, he strongly resisted the caliph's demand for him to give up his codex to state representatives.

The Year in which the Process of Codical Unification Began

Ibn Ḥajar reports, "The process of codical unification began in 25 A.H. corresponding to the second or third year of ʿUthmān's reign as caliph."[3] He then continues his discourse saying, "Some have claimed that this process commenced somewhere around 30 A.H. However, they have failed to provide any evidence in substantiation of this claim."[4]

Ibn al-Athīr, along with some other scholars, has made the same mistake and has recorded this event as having taken place in 30 A.H. Ibn al-Athīr writes, "In this year (30 A.H.) Ḥudhayfah, along with ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn Rabīʿah, took part in a military campaign. There they witnessed grave differences between the people with respect to the Holy Qur'ān. Upon returning home, they asked ʿUthmān to take steps for fixing this debacle and, subsequently, their request was met with the caliph's approval."[5]

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1. ***Biḥār al-Anwār***, vol. 92, pg. 41-42.
2. Ibn Saʿd, ***al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā***, vol. 3, pg. 270.
3. There exist two opinions about the start of ʿUthmān's caliphate. Some believe that the people pledged allegiance to him during the last ten days of Dhu'l-Ḥijjah (the 12th month of the Islamic calendar) in the year 23 A.H. If this is true, then the formation of the codical unification committee would fall somewhere in the beginning of ʿUthmān's third year as caliph. However, another group claims that ʿUthmān took charge of the caliphate during the first ten days of Muḥarram (the 1st month of the Islamic calendar) in the year 24 A.H. According to this narration, the constitution of the said committee would fall somewhere during the end of ʿUthmān's second year as ruler. (***Tārīkh al-Ṭabarī***, vol. 3, pg. 304, vol. 4, pg. 242)
4. ***Fatḥ al-Bārī***, vol. 9, pg. 15.
5. ***Al-Kāmil fi'l-Tārīkh***, vol. 3, pg. 111; ***al-Futūḥāt al-Islāmiyyah***, vol. 1, pg. 175.

We believe that Ibn al-Athīr's calculations in this matter are flawed. This conclusion is based on the following arguments:

Firstly, according to the tradition narrated by Abū-Mikhnaf, and quoted by al-Ṭabarī, the campaign in Armenia took place in 24 A.H.[1] Ibn Ḥajar writes, "Armenia was conquered during the caliphate of ʿUthmān and the general in command of Muslim forces was Salmān ibn Rabīʿah al-Bāhilī, an Iraqi. ʿUthmān had ordered all able-bodied Muslims from Iraq and Syria to take part in this venture. The troops from Syria were under the command of Ḥabīb ibn Salamah al-Fihrī. Ḥudhayfah was also part of this army." In addition, he continues, "According to what the historians have narrated, Armenia was conquered in 24 A.H. during the start of al-Walīd ibn ʿUqbah ibn Muʿīṭ's governorship of al-Kūfah. Al-Walīd had attained this position by order of ʿUthmān."[2]

Secondly, the military campaign involving ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn Rabīʿah took place in 22 A.H. and the person accompanying him on this venture was Ḥudhayfah ibn Usayd al-Ghifārī, not Ḥudhayfah ibn al-Yamān.[3]

Thirdly, in 30 A.H. Saʿīd came to replace al-Walīd as governor of al-Kūfah. In the same year, Saʿīd became engaged in preparations for a military campaign in Ṭabaristān (modern day Mazandaran, in Iran). Ibn al-Zubayr, Ibn ʿAbbās and Ḥudhayfah had also accompanied him in this military expedition.[4] Due to these said preoccupations, Saʿīd's return to al-Madīnah did not take place until the year 34 A.H. Only one year after his return, in 35 A.H., ʿUthmān was killed.[5] Alongside this, we already know that Saʿīd, Ibn al-Zubayr, Ibn ʿAbbās and Ḥudhayfah were all key members of the committee responsible for codical unification. Therefore, upon examining all the available data, we have no choice but to conclude that the process of codical unification could not have started in 30 A.H.

Fourthly, al-Dhahabī reports that Ubayy ibn Kaʿb died in 33 A.H. In continuation, he quotes al-Wāqidī as having said, "It is a matter of absolute certainty that Ubayy ibn Kaʿb held the responsibility of dictating Qur'ānic text to other members of the said committee. He was the principle authority, referred to by them, whenever they engaged in confirming the veracity of available Qur'ānic manuscripts."[6]

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1. ***Tārīkh al-Ṭabarī***, vol. 4, pg. 246-247.
2. ***Fatḥ al-Bārī***, vol. 9, pg. 13-14.
3. ***Tārīkh al-Ṭabarī***, vol. 4, pg. 155.
4. Ibid, vol. 4, pg. 269-271.
5. Ibid, vol. 4, pg. 330 & 365.
6. Al-Dhahabī, ***Mīzān al-Iʿtidāl***, vol. 2, pg. 84. Refer to: Ibn Saʿd, ***al-Ṭabaqāt al-***

Fifthly, the tradition narrated by Yazīd al-Nakhaʿī tells us that this event took place before 30 A.H. Similarly, we find Ibn Ḥajar placing this occurrence somewhere in the vicinity of al-Walīd's first few years as governor of al-Kūfah,[1] and we know that al-Walīd took hold of this office no later than 26 A.H. (e.g. Sayf narrates that al-Walīd rose to this position in 25 A.H.).[2]

Sixthly, the most firm evidence, available to us, proving that this venture began in 25 A.H., is the tradition narrated by Ibn Abī-Dāwūd. He quotes al-Musayyab ibn Saʿd as having said, "'Uthmān, having decided to unify the codices, addressed the people saying, 'Only fifteen years have passed since the demise of your Prophet and you have fallen into disagreement about the Qur'ān! I have decided to call upon all those who have heard something of the Qur'ān from the Holy Prophet (ṣ) himself, to come and recite it for me and to place whatever they know at my disposal.'"[3]

Keeping in mind that the Holy Prophet (ṣ) bade farewell to this material realm in the year 10 A.H., ʿUthmān's speech explicitly places the start of codical unification in 25 A.H. Apart from this, the only person to have reported that this process began in 30 A.H. is Ibn al-Athīr, and when analyzed, we find his report to be devoid of sound academic credentials.

On the other hand, the chronological placement of crucial historical events must take place based on meticulous research. One cannot merely rely on one reported date or the other. Even al-Ṭabarī himself does not completely trust the narrated dates of such occurrences. In the case of the Battle of Nahāwand, he refrains from deciding upon a definite date and, thus, narrates two separate dates as possible (one being 18 A.H. and the other 21 A.H.).[4]

Therefore, it would not be wise to depend wholeheartedly upon the dates narrated by various historians. What is necessary is that these dates be corroborated by taking into consideration all the various angles and aspects that come into play during the study of a certain historical incident.

Stages within the Process of Codical Unification

The committee in-charge of the said operation, completed its task in three stages:

1. Collect authentic and verifiable source documents to make the

Kubrā, vol. 3, pg. 62.
1. ***Fatḥ al-Bārī***, vol. 9, pg. 13-14.
2. ***Tārīkh al-Ṭabarī***, vol. 4, pg. 251.
3. al-Sajistānī, ***al-Maṣāḥif***, pg. 24.
4. ***Tārīkh al-Ṭabarī***, vol. 4, pg. 114.

compilation of an official codex, and its distribution amongst the Muslims possible.

2. Compare copies of the official codex with one another, to confirm their accuracy, consistency and homogeneity.

3. Confiscate all unsanctioned codices, or other partial manuscripts consisting of Qur'ānic text, from all across the Muslim territories so that these texts could be destroyed and be permanently put out of circulation.

4. Finally, enforce and ensure the adherence of the people to this new codex, as well as oblige them to forsake all others.

The committee, however, failed to carry out its responsibilities in full. Especially, this committee stands accused to having engaged in great carelessness with regard to stage two of this said process (comparison between the codices), a stage that required exceptional care towards the minutest of details.

With respect to the last stage of codical unification (confiscation of all unsanctioned copies of the Holy Qur'ān), ʿUthmān sent forth representatives to all parts of the Muslim state in order to collect the codices in circulation and have them burnt.[1]

Al-Yaqūbī reports, "From all across the Muslim provinces, unsanctioned codices were collected, boiled in a solution made of water and vinegar, and later washed." He also reports that according to some narrations the said codices were burnt. Only ʿAbdullāh ibn Masʿūd's codex remained clear of the bonfire. This was because he refused to give it up to ʿAbdullāh ibn ʿĀmir, the representative of the caliph sent to al-Kūfah for this purpose. Subsequently, and as a result of his refusal to comply with the caliph's wishes, ʿAbdullāh ibn Masʿūd was summoned to the court in al-Madīnah. As he entered the mosque in al-Madīnah, ʿUthmān, who was engaged in delivering a sermon to the people, cried out, "Behold an ugly animal has entered into your midst." Ibn Masʿūd answered him angrily, upon which the caliph commanded that he be stretched out on the ground and his ribs be broken. This event caused ʿĀ'ishah to speak out furiously against the caliph and, having done so, she said many things.[2]

In the beginning, ʿUthmān assumed that the said task could be achieved without great effort and, hence, miscalculated the inherent complexity of the work at hand. As a result, the committee he initially constituted was comprised of only a few, largely unqualified, individuals. However, as the

1. ***Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī***, vol. 6, pg. 226.
2. ***Tārīkh al-Yaʿqūbī***, vol. 2, pg. 159-160.

reality of the situation dawned upon him, he decided to seek help from an expert like Ubayy ibn Kaʿb, a senior reciter and renowned companion of the Holy Prophet (ṣ)[1]. Likewise, he asked Ḥafṣah's permission to use the codex compiled during Abū-Bakr's reign. Initially, this request was turned down because Ḥafṣah feared for the safety of the said manuscript, but finally, she handed it over when the caliph promised to have it returned unharmed. ʿUthmān used this manuscript as an authentic source document from which texts could be copied. Similarly, newly compiled codices were compared to this keystone document for their accuracy to be verified.[2]

Additionally, ʿUthmān had issued an appeal to the people to bring forth any piece of the Holy Qur'ān, written down directly from the Holy Prophet's (ṣ)[3] speech. This appeal culminated in an influx of numerous tablets, bones, slabs of wood and other mediums upon which portions of the divine text were inscribed. Probably, the committee had hoped, through this measure, to collect records drawn up by people present during the final stages of the Qur'ān's revelation upon the Holy Prophet (ṣ). Ibn Sīrīn describes the situation as such, "Whenever a difference of opinion existed with respect to a certain verse, the committee would delay its final decision about whether to register it as part of the Holy Qur'ān or not. Some believe that the intention behind this abeyance was to allow for the inclusion of opinions held by individuals present during the final stages of the Qur'ān's revelation upon the Holy Prophet (ṣ)."[4]

Anas ibn Mālik reports: "I was amongst the people responsible for dictating Qur'ānic verses to the scribes. If there appeared a disagreement regarding a certain verse, we would refer it to individuals who had personally heard the Prophet (ṣ) reciting this contended portion of the Holy Qur'ān. If such persons were not present in al-Madīnah at the time, we would write down a few verses preceding and following the portion in question and would send them this document. They, in turn, would either send us a reply in writing or would decide to come and meet the committee in person."[5]

Ubayy ibn Kaʿb was also amongst the people responsible for the dictation of Qur'ānic verses to nominated scribes. He was also a key individual referred to by the committee whenever they came across a disputed verse. He, upon receiving such a request, would correct the text in question and, subsequently, would return this amended version to the codical unification

1. ***Tahdhīb al-Tahdhīb***, vol. 1, pg. 187; ***al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā***, vol. 3, pg. 62.
2. Al-Sajistānī, ***al-Maṣāḥif***, pg. 9; ***Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī***, vol. 6, pg. 226.
3. Al-Sajistānī, ***al-Maṣāḥif***, pg. 24.
4. Ibid, pg. 25.
5. Ibid, pg. 21.

committee.

In the tradition narrated by Abū'l-ʿĀliyah, it has been reported that the committee used the codex of Ubayy ibn Kaʿb as a source document from which much of the new codex was derived. The same tradition also reports that Ubayy personally dictated Qur'ānic verses to select scribes appointed to him by the unification committee. These scribes promptly wrote down every word he recited.[1]

ʿAbdullāh ibn Hāni' al-Barbarī (ʿUthmān's slave) reports: "I was in the company of ʿUthmān while he was engaged in comparing texts, recorded in various codices, with one another. He gave me a sheep's shoulder blade upon which was written '*lam yatasanna*, '*lā tabdīla lilkhalqi'llāhi* and '*famhil alkāfirīna*.' I took this to Ubayy ibn Kaʿb and he corrected the three phrases so that they read '*lam yatasannah*, '*la tabdīda likhalqi'llāhi* and '*famahhil alkāfirīna*."[2]

Especially in stage two of the process (wherein copies of the new codex were to be compared with one another to ensure their uniformity and accuracy), grave acts of carelessness and indolence plagued the committee's work. So much so that the newly finished ʿUthmānic codex was replete with spelling mistakes and incongruities, and none of the copies accurately resembled the other. Guilt in this matter rests squarely on the shoulders of the committee, and in particular, upon ʿUthmān, since they abstained from any reformative action despite being aware of this problem.

According to Ibn Abī-Dāwūd's narration, some of the people of Syria used to say, "Our codex, and the codex of the people of al-Baṣrah, is more accurate than the codex of al-Kūfah. This is because the codex dispatched to al-Kūfah by ʿUthmān was based upon the recitation of ʿAbdullāh and was sent to them without being cross-checked with other codices or corrected. However, the codices of al-Baṣrah and Syria were sent only after having gone through the process of comparison and correction."[3]

This narration clearly shows that the said codices were dispatched to all four corners of the expansive Muslim state without being properly corroborated and verified. The existence of differences between the codices present in different cities, as is evident from Ibn Abī-Dāwūd's report,[4] screams of heedlessness on the part of the committee responsible for this crucial task.

In another location, Ibn Abī-Dāwūd speaks of an issue that brings to light a

1. Ibid, pg. 30.
2. ***Al-Itqān***, vol. 1, pg. 183.
3. Al-Sajistānī, ***al-Maṣāḥif***, pg. 35.
4. Ibid, pg. 39-49.

far greater gaffe perpetrated by the committee in question. He says, "Once the copies of the new codex had been prepared, they were taken to the court of ʿUthmān so that the caliph might examine the final product of the committee's efforts. Upon scrutinizing the presented manuscripts, the caliph remarked, 'You have prepared them well.' ʿUthmān saw errors in the text spawned of dialectal differences between Arabs. With respect to these mistakes, he said, 'If a person from the tribe of Hudhayl had been responsible for the dictation and an individual from the tribe of Thaqīf had been entrusted with the task of inscription, such mistakes would not have taken place."[1]

It is self evident that the Book of God deserved much greater care, toil and effort than invested into it by the caliph and his committee. Without doubt, the codex should have been protected from all spelling and dialectal errors. Apart from this, ʿUthmān's regret vis-à-vis this issue seems meaningless, since he had the knowledge and the power to appoint the right individuals for both tasks from the start. He could have arranged for a person from Hudhayl to perform the dictation and could have employed people from Thaqīf to complete the inscription. Nevertheless, he assigned this venture to his close acquaintances and supporters, while being completely aware of their inherent incapability and lack of expertise. As a result, the final product became a source of numerous disagreements about the Qur'ān's recitation for decades to come.

The Number of ʿUthmānic Codices

Historians hold several opinions when it comes to the actual number of codices prepared by ʿUthmān and sent to all provinces of the Muslim State. Ibn Abī-Dāwūd believes that these codices were six in total, each dispatched to one of the six important Muslim centers of that time. These six centers, holding pivotal importance within the Muslim state, were Makkah, al-Madīnah, al-Kūfah, al-Baṣrah, Syria, Bahrain and Yemen. In addition to these six codices, he reports that one extra codex was kept in safe custody within al-Madīnah. This codex earned the name "umm" (mother) or "imām" (leader) of the codices.[2] According to al-Yaʿqūbī, there existed another two codices which were sent to Egypt and Algeria.[3] These principle codices were kept in the provincial capitals, whereas copies made from them were put into circulation amongst the masses. Only the text and recitation of these official codices was recognized as authentic. Consequently, other texts and recitations were deemed unlawful and their usage was declared punishable.

1. Ibid, pg. 32-33.
2. Ibid, pg. 34.
3. ***Tārīkh al-Yaʿqūbī***, vol. 2, pg. 160.

The codex in al-Madīnah was the referral authority for all people. If a disagreement were to surface between the codices held in the various provinces, the codex in al-Madīnah would be the standard used to resolve this given issue. As a result, any correction made to the provincial codices would be in accordance with the text held in al-Madīnah.

According to narrated reports, ʿUthmān ordered that each codex be accompanied by a reciter responsible for teaching the official recitation to people within the province in question. Notable from amongst such individuals were ʿAbdullāh ibn al-Sā'ib, accompanying the codex of Makkah, al-Mughīrah ibn Shuʿbah, sent with the codex of Syria, Abū-ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn Salamah, dispatched alongside with the codex of al-Kūfah, and ʿĀmir ibn ʿAbd al-Qays, entrusted with the codex of al-Baṣrah. Similarly, in keeping to this pattern, Zayd ibn Thābit was appointed by the caliph as the official reciter in al-Madīnah.[1]

Elements within the state apparatus were particularly sensitive about the protection of these official codices. This resulted in them remaining safe and unaltered for an extended period of time. However, after a long time had passed, changes began appearing within these manuscripts. The introduction of dots, grammatical symbols and inflection marks, as well as the division of these codices into several smaller portions in order to make them more portable and easier to read, were amongst the many modifications that had begun to take shape. Eventually, the style of Arabic writing incorporated into these codices changed from 'Early Kufic[2] Font' to the famous 'Kufic Font' we know today. Later on, the much more beautiful 'Arabic Naskh Font', as well as other diverse fonts, became popular. Slowly, these gradual changes resulted in the ʿUthmānic codices becoming forgotten and obsolete amongst the masses, until finally no trace of them remained in Muslim society.

Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī (deceased 626 A.H.) reports that a copy of the ʿUthmānic codex, thought to be written by the caliph himself, resided within the grand mosque in Damascus.[3] This manuscript was seen by Faḍlullāh al-ʿUmayrī (deceased 749 A.H.). Al-ʿUmayrī reports, "An ʿUthmānic codex, written by ʿUthmān ibn ʿAffān himself, lies in the left corner of the grand mosque of Damascus."[4] We find no historical report indicating that ʿUthmān actually inscribed a codex himself. It seems that the manuscript was the official codex sent to Syria that had survived the many centuries since its arrival there.

1. ***Manāhil al-ʿIrfān***, vol. 1, pg. 396-397.
2. *Kufic*: pertaining to, belonging to the city of al-Kūfah.
3. ***Muʿjam al-Buldān***, vol. 2, pg. 469.
4. ***Masālik al-Abṣār fi Mamālik al-Amṣār***, vol. 1, pg. 195.

Ibn Kathīr (deceased 774 A.H.) has also spoken of this codex, but has not attributed its inscription to ʿUthmān himself. He writes, "The most renowned of the ʿUthmānic codices today is the one present in Syria, resting near the eastern corner of the grand mosque in Damascus. This manuscript resided in the city of Tabriya before being transferred to Damascus somewhere around the year 518 A.H. I have personally seen this voluminous tome. It is a hefty book written in a beautiful font with bright and clear letters. The ink used is of good quality and the pages, as far as I could tell, were made of camel skin."[1]

The famous world traveler, Ibn Baṭṭūṭah (deceased 779 A.H.) describes the codex as such, "Near the eastern corner, and opposite to a prayer niche in the mosque's wall indicating the direction towards Makkah, there exists a sanctum in which lies preserved the codex sent by ʿUthmān to Syria. This treasury is opened for the public every Fridays, after the congregational prayers. On that day, the people flock toward the manuscript, kissing it for good charm and using it to swear oaths in order to settle disputes and disagreements amongst themselves."[2] It has been said that this book remained in its place until finally it fell prey to fire in 1310 A.H.[3]

Dr. Ṣubḥī al-Ṣāliḥ says, "My friend, Professor Dr. Yūsuf al-ʿAsh, quoted Qāḍī ʿAbd al-Ḥasan al-Astawānī as having said that he saw the codex before it was lost during the fire. He also reported that it was kept within a wooden container inside the grand mosque of Damascus."[4]

Professor al-Zarqānī says, "Today, we no longer have decisive proof of the existence of ʿUthmānic codices. Therefore, certain proof indicating where they were kept is even more elusive."

Some have speculated that the historical codices preserved in some Egyptian libraries are, in fact, ʿUthmānic codices. This theory, however, is full of holes. This is because the manuscripts in question bear markings that indicate the end of a chapter and the start of another. We know with certainty that the ʿUthmānic codices were devoid of any such markings.

In the treasury of the holy shrine of Imam al-Ḥusayn (ʿa), there exists a codex, written in old Kufic font, said to have been inscribed by ʿUthmān himself. Keeping in mind that it is composed of a dense volume and is devoid of all markings, this codex is indeed very similar to the codices of al-Madīnah and Syria, specially since it contains similarities with spellings incorporated in the ʿUthmānic codices. One such example is the usage of the

1. ***Faḍā'il al-Qur'ān, pg.*** 49.
2. ***Al-Riḥlah***, vol. 1, pg. 53.
3. Maqrīzī al-, Aḥmad ibn ʿAlī, ***Al-Khuṭūṭ al-Maqrīziyyah***, vol. 5, pg. 279.
4. Ṣubḥī al-Ṣāliḥ, ***Mabāḥith fī ʿUlūm al-Qur'ān***; Footnotes, pg. 89.

word *yartadda*, in Sūrah al-Mā'idah, as *yartadid*. It is, therefore, highly probable that this Qur'ān be a copy produced in accordance with one of the ʿUthmānic codices.[1]

Similarly, there lies preserved a manuscript, with a few pages missing, in the ʿAlawid Treasury in the holy city of al-Najaf. Its inscription is attributed to Imam ʿAlī ibn Abī-Ṭālib (ʿa) himself. It is written in old Kufic font and, at its end, we find a sentence saying that ʿAlī ibn Abī-Ṭālib (ʿa) finished writing it in the year 4 A.H.

Abū-ʿAbdullāh al-Zanjānī says, "I saw the manuscript, written in old Kufic font, preserved in the ʿAlawid Treasury in Najaf. On its last page, this sentence is written, 'Inscribed by ʿAlī ibn Abū-Ṭālib in the year 4 A.H.' In the old Kufic font the words *abī* and *abū* are similar in shape. It seems that someone of very limited knowledge added this sentence to the end of said manuscript. We say this because we see the word 'Abū-Ṭālib' having been used, whereas the correct usage should have been 'Abī-Ṭālib.'"[2] Likewise, in the museum of the mosque of Imam al-Ḥusayn (ʿa) in Cairo, there exists a codex attributed to Imam ʿAlī ibn Abī-Ṭālib (ʿa). Similar to the manuscript mentioned above, the font incorporated in this particular book is also old Kufic. With reference to this manuscript, Professor al-Zarqānī remarks, "It is possible that this codex be the handiwork of ʿAlī ibn Abī-Ṭālib (ʿa) himself, or that he had it prepared in al-Kūfah upon his orders."

Ibn Baṭṭūṭah reports, "In the mosque of Amīr al-Mu'minīn ʿAlī (ʿa) in al-Baṣrah, the codex used by ʿUthmān during his murder lies preserved. Drops of his blood are still visible on the page that holds this verse:[3]

﴿فَإِنْ ءَامَنُواْ بِمِثْلِ مَآ ءَامَنتُم بِهِۦ فَقَدِ ٱهْتَدَواْ ۖ وَّإِن تَوَلَّوْاْ فَإِنَّمَا هُمْ فِى شِقَاقٍ ۖ
فَسَيَكْفِيكَهُمُ ٱللَّهُ ۚ وَهُوَ ٱلسَّمِيعُ ٱلْعَلِيمُ﴾

"If then they believe as you believe in Him, they are indeed on the right course, and if they turn back, then they are only in great opposition, so Allah will suffice you against them, and He is the Hearing, the Knowing."[4]

This narration is, nevertheless, suspect, and there exists very little probability that it is correct.

Al-Samhūdī quotes Muḥriz ibn Thābit as having said, "I received news that

1. ***Manāhil al-ʿIrfān***, vol. 1, pg. 397-398.
2. ***Tārīkh al-Qur'ān***, pg. 46.
3. ***Al-Riḥlah***, vol. 1, pg. 116.
4. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Baqarah (2:137).

the codex of ʿUthmān was in the custody of Khālid ibn ʿAmr ibn ʿUthmān. When al-Mahdī, the ʿAbbāsid ruler, came to power, he had this codex sent to al-Madīnah, replacing the codex of al-Ḥajjāj that lay preserved in a chest under the pulpit. Today, this very codex is the Qur'ān recited in al-Madīnah."

Ibn Zabalah reports, "I was told by Mālik ibn Anas that, 'al-Ḥajjāj had sent codices to all the major Muslim cities and, therefore, he had dispatched one large volume to al-Madīnah as well. This codex lay preserved in a chest to the right of the pillar that marked the place of the Holy Prophet (ṣ). On Thursdays and Fridays, this chest was opened for the general public. When al-Mahdī, the ʿAbbāsid ruler, had an invaluable codex sent to al-Madīnah, this new codex came to replace al-Ḥajjāj's manuscript and, thus, took its place inside the same chest."

Al-Samhūdī writes, "No report has been found about the codex, attributed to ʿUthmān, which lies today inside the dome at the center of the mosque."

Ibn al-Najjār, the first person to have written a treatise discussing the codices kept in various mosques, declares, "The earliest codices wore out with time and their pages fell apart. Today, no trace remains of them."[1]

The General Characteristics of the ʿUthmānic Codices

In terms of sequence, and apart from a few minor differences, the ʿUthmānic codices were similar to the codices prepared by other companions of the Holy Prophet (ṣ). Within these manuscripts, the chapters were arranged in a manner that the lengthy ones came before the shorter ones. They were devoid of any symbols or inflection marks. Similarly, these codices did not divide the Holy Qur'ān into the various sections that we see prevalent in copies of the Holy Qur'ān printed today. The ʿUthmānic codex was crammed with spelling mistakes, as well as numerous scriptural contradictions. These errors were spawned of the fact that the font being used by the companions was truly in a most nascent stage of its development.

The general traits of these codices were as follows:

1. Sequence of Chapters: As has already been mentioned, the ʿUthmānic codices were similar to the other codices existing at the time. It was especially congruous with the codex of Ubayy ibn Kaʿb, whose manuscript was used as a principle source document in the project of codical unification. In what follows, we shall mention a few of the differences that existed between the official codex and the codices of the other companions.

In the codices of the companions, Sūrah Yūnus was placed amongst the

1.Al-Samhūdī, ***Wafā' al-Wafā bi-Akhbār al-Muṣṭafā***, vol. 2, pg. 667-668.

seven large chapters of the Holy Qur'ān and occupied the position of being seventh[1] or eighth[2] in terms of length. However, ʿUthmān deliberately merged Sūrah al-Anfāl and Sūrah al-Tawbah, making them one chapter, and this resultant chapter became part of the seven large ones. Consequently, the position of Sūrah Yūnus was changed and it became part of a group of chapters collectively known as Mi'a'īn. Ibn ʿAbbās, criticizing ʿUthmān's actions, remarked, "With what authority and permission have you taken Sūrah al-Anfāl, which is from amongst the Mathānī chapters,[3] and merged it with Sūrah al-Tawbah, which is a Mi'ā'īn chapter, removing the *basmalah* from in between the two?" ʿUthmān responded, "Chapters would be revealed to the Holy Prophet (ṣ), and subsequently individual verses would descend upon him. He would summon the scribes of the Holy Qur'ān and would say, 'Place this verse in such and such place within such and such chapter.' Sūrah al-Anfāl was revealed in al-Madīnah during the early years after the migration, and Sūrah al-Tawbah was amongst the last chapters to be revealed. However, in terms of subject matter, they are in close proximity and, therefore, I believed them to be one chapter. The Prophet (ṣ), too, passed away without revealing that Sūrah al-Tawbah was the continuation of Sūrah al-Anfāl. Therefore, I had these two chapters merged into one, removing the *basmalah* from in between them, and placed them amongst the seven lengthy chapters of the Holy Qur'ān."[4]

This story confirms that the companions regarded themselves capable to forming personal opinions with respect to the sequence of Qur'ānic chapters. ʿUthmān knew that the Holy Prophet (ṣ) would sometimes order a certain verse be placed in a certain chapter, regardless of its sequence in terms of revelation. Since he saw the subject matter of the two chapters as similar, he assumed Sūrah al-Tawbah to be a continuation of Sūrah al-Anfāl.[5] The similarity he saw was that one chapter spoke sternly in opposition to the enemies of Islam, infidels as well as polytheists, while the other called upon

1. In the codex of Ibn Masʿūd.
2. In the codex of Ubayy Ibn Kaʿb.
3. Sūrah al-Anfāl was considered part of the Mathānī chapters according to ʿAbdullāh ibn Masʿūd's codex, but in accordance to Ubayy ibn Kaʿb's manuscript it was a Mi'ā'īn chapter.
4. ***Al-Mustadrak***, vol. 2, pg. 221&330.
5. The tradition quoted by al-ʿAyyāshī in volume 2 of his exegesis upon the Holy Qur'ān (pg. 73) deems these two chapters to be one chapter. Overall, the scholars are at odds with regards to this issue (Refer to: ***Tafsīr al-Ṭabarsī***, vol. 5, pg. 2). However, al-ʿAyyāshī himself prefers to consider them one chapter. He argues that the absence of the *basmalah* in between these two chapters is indicative of a unity between them. (***Tafsīr al-ʿAyyāshī***, vol. 1, pg. 19).

the believers to act decisively towards the establishment of God's law on earth. ʿUthmān merged these two chapters and declared the resulting chapter as the seventh lengthiest within the Holy Qur'ān, even though, there existed no narrative evidence indicating a unity between the two. The caliph, probably, failed to appreciate that Sūrah al-Tawbah consisted of harsh warnings to the infidels and promises of damnation and, thus, did not begin with the *basmalah* (In the name of God, Most Beneficent, Most Merciful). This was because such a statement, signifying the abundant mercy of God, bears no resemblance to the harsh message embodied by the said chapter. With respect to this matter, Imam ʿAlī (ʿa) says, "The *basmalah* signifies peace and mercy, whereas Sūrah al-Tawbah has its fingers warped around the hilt of a sharpened sword!"[1]

Differences between the ʿUthmānic codex and other codices were limited to such instances, all of them being minor and related to the sequence of certain chapters.

2. Being Devoid of Dots and Other Symbols: The ʿUthmānic codex, according to the style of inscription prevalent amongst the Arabs of that time, was devoid of all dots and symbols. Therefore, there was no textual indication that differentiated between alphabets with dots and alphabet without dots. In this manner, the letters that signified the sounds /b/, /t/, /ø/, and /y/ all looked alike. Similarly, with the absence of inflection marks, the role of individual words and their meanings, in context of complete sentences, was not comprehensible textually. The reciter, therefore, had to decipher all these factors himself, based upon the contextual evidence available to him.

Keeping this in mind, we understand that during the first century A.H. the recitation of the Holy Qur'ān was possible only through repetition of what was recited by others. Recitation from the text itself was impossible because words like *tablū* (you test), *nablū* (we test), *natlū* (we recite), *tatlū* (she recites) and *yatlū* (he recites) were completely indistinguishable from one another. Likewise, it was impossible to differentiate between words like *yaʿlamuhū* (he knows it), *taʿlamuhū* (you know it), *naʿlamuhū* (we know it) and *biʿilmihī* (through his knowledge). In this manner, almost every verse of the Holy Qur'ān could be recited in numerous dissimilar ways, all leading to numerous diverse meanings.

Herein, we shall present a few examples of the different recitations that came about due to the absence of such markings in the ʿUthmānic codex:

1. ***Al-Mustadrak***, vol. 2, pg. 330; ***Al-Itqān***, vol. 1, pg. 65.

In Sūrah al-Baqarah, verse 259, the word *nunshizuhā* (we set them together) was also read *nanshuruhā* (we bring them to life) and *tanshuruhā* (you bring them to life).[1]

In Sūrah Āl-ʿImrān verse 48, the word *yuʿallimuhū* (he teaches him) was also pronounced *nuʿallimuhū* (we teach him).[2]

In Sūrah Yūnus verse 30, the world *tablū* (will be tested) was also recited as *tatlū* (you recite).[3]

In Sūrah Yūnus verse 92, the word *nunajjīka* (we save you) was also pronounced *nunḥīka* (we make you reach a certain side).[4]

In Sūrah Al-ʿAnkabūt verse 58, the word *lanubawwi'annahum* (we will certainly give them abode) was also read *lanuthwiyannahum* (we will give a home).[5]

In Sūrah Saba' verse 17, the word *nujāzī* (we reward) was also pronounced *yujāzā* (he is awarded).[6]

In Sūrah al-Ḥujurāt verse 6, the word *fatabayyanū* (so, you should make investigation) was also recited as *fatathabbatū* (so, you should make sure).[7]

Therefore, it is a matter of absolute certitude that the absence of adequate marks and symbols in the ʿUthmānic codex became the chief cause for disagreements and differences sprouting up between Muslims in later centuries. People had to depend solely upon hearing and memorizing the Qur'ān in order to recite it correctly, and the text itself could not be used to verify what they had learnt. As a result, it was but natural that conflicts sprung up. No matter how meticulously a recitation be memorized, because the human memory is susceptible to forgetfulness, the reciter would always remain prone to error. The only way to resolve this issue was to have a written text with which it could be possible to corroborate what one had memorized. As the Arabic idiom dictates: "Flees away that which is memorized and stays firm that which is written down."

Apart from this, the influx of non-Arabs into the Arabian Peninsula, and the demographic expansion they experienced, were also factors leading towards the birth of recitational disagreements.

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1. Refer to: ***Tafsīr al-Ṭabarsī***, vol. 2, pg. 368.
2. Refer to: Ibid, vol. 2, pg. 444.
3. Refer to: Ibid, vol. 5, pg. 105.
4. Refer to: Ibid, vol. 5, pg. 130.
5. Refer to: Ibid, vol. 8, pg. 290.
6. Ibid, vol. 8, pg. 384.
7. Ibid, vol. 3, pg. 94, vol. 9, pg. 131.

The committee constituted by ʿUthmān should have taken into account the needs of future generations, and should have taken appropriate steps to ensure the minimization of all possible differences and conflicts in the future. However, the chronic sloth that characterized all state officials, in power at that time, effectively prevented any such measure from taking place.

Ibn al-Jazrī believes that the caliphate deliberately refrained from placing any marks or symbols within these official codices. He holds that this action was not indicative of heedlessness but, instead, represented a wise and conscious decision taken in order to achieve a higher goal. He writes, "It is possible that the committee took these steps keeping in mind the chances of error that existed in written texts. As a result, they decided to rely on the old method of listening to verses recited by the Holy Prophet (ṣ) and then memorizing them."[1]

Al-Zarqānī, accepting al-Jazrī's opinion, remarks, "They used to record the words of the Holy Qur'ān without any marks or symbols so as to prevent the occurrence of mistakes. Subsequently, they relied on recitations, that they had heard themselves and had later memorized, so as to read what the Holy Qur'ān said."[2]

The fact of the matter is that Arabic text was totally devoid of dots, marks and symbols at that time. This was because Arabic, as a written language, was still in its nascent developmental stages. As such, advances such as inflection marks and dots were not yet part of its textual system. The people of that time were simply unaware that such things were also possible. This veracity of this matter is indisputable and, therefore, it is known to be an absolute historical certainty. Thus, we find that the view held by al-Zarqānī and Ibn al-Jazrī, regarding this issue, is totally incorrect and utterly empty of any academic value.

Birth of the Arabic Font

No evidence is available pointing towards the existence of written text within ancient Arabs. The advent of writing, amidst the Arabs, took place shortly before the dawn of Islam. The reason behind the Arab's ignorance towards writing was their Bedouin way of life. Theirs was a gypsy lifestyle, with tribes that moved from place to place, marked with plunder and war, devoid of any shadow of civilization. They were so preoccupied with sheer survival that they had no time to ponder about industry. This was especially true with regard to inscription and writing, two industries characteristic of

1. ***Al-Nashr fī'l-Qirā'āt al-ʿAshr***, vol. 1, pg. 7.
2. ***Manāhil al-ʿIrfān***, vol. 1, pg. 251.

metropolitan civilizations. However, some Arabs had established contacts with Syria and Iraq because of trade ties that they had with the peoples of these two lands. These contacts, slowly but surely, allowed for cultural exchanges between the Arab tribesmen and their host mercantile cities, causing the Bedouin traders to become influenced by many facets of the latter's well developed urbanity. One such transferred piece of knowledge was "writing." It was from here that Syriac (an eastern dialect of Aramaic) and Nabataean writing styles entered into the Arab world. These scripts remained common and influential even after Islam's domination of the Arabian Peninsula.

The Naskh font, which is famous and survives to this day, developed from the Nabataean script. Similarly, the Kufic writing style developed from the Syriac font. This style was also known as the Ḥīrah script, deriving its name from the ancient Arabian city of al-Ḥīrah that lies close to al-Kūfah. Changes and developments experienced by the Syriac script, as it transformed into the Ḥīrah font, took place largely within the walls of this particular city. However, with the creation of al-Kūfah and its proclamation as the seat of Arabian culture, the script in question was also renamed Kufic. This writing style remained popular amongst the Arabs for many a generation.

The Nabataean script, which later transformed into the Naskh font, was learnt by the Arabs during their travels to Syria. However, the Ḥīrah or Kufic script was attained from interactions with Iraq. Initially, the Arabs employed these scripts only for simple correspondences and daily writings, but later on began to utilize them for crucial projects as well. Such projects included the preservation of the Holy Qur'ān and the Ḥadīth.

Evidence proving that the Kufic style evolved from the Syriac script is that when the Arabs wanted to write the word الكتاب (*alkitāb*) they would inscribe it in this form: الكتب. The latter was still pronounced *alkitāb*, but had the *alif* (ا) missing. This was a style characteristic to Syriac, wherein the elongated vowel sound created by *al-alif al-mamdūdah*[1] was not represented textually, but was simply understood and pronounced accordingly.

Writing was not common amongst the Arabs of al-Ḥijāz during the early days of Islam. In total, the number of individuals who knew how to write did not exceed thirteen, and it was from amongst this lot that the Prophet (ṣ) would chose his scribes. Slowly, and as a result of the Prophet's encouragements, more and more Muslims equipped themselves with this vital skill.

Naskh and Kufic were the two scripts that survived the test of time and

1. Literally meaning the elongated *alif*, a sound equivalent to long /a/ in English.

became favorites amongst the Arabs. Continuous efforts were put in to further beautify these writing styles. Notable within this process was the work of Ibn Muqlah who, during the fourth century of Hegira, strove tirelessly to refine and adorn the Arabic script. His work was especially focused towards the beautification of the Naskh font. It was he who took Naskh to the zenith of its development, and it remains in that state to this day.

The Kufic font, however, underwent a process of retrogradation. After the initial two centuries, in which its usage was commonplace, the Kufic script began regressing until it reached a point of nonexistence and was completely replaced by Naskh. From then onwards, all codices of the Holy Qur'ān came to be inscribed in the Naskh font,[1]

The Advent of Dots in the Codices

Both Syriac and Nabataean scripts, from which Arabic text developed, were devoid of dots and other symbols. In fact, Syriac has remained such to this very day. In the first half of the first century, Arabic was written without the inclusion of any dots or pointing diacritics; symbols which allow the reader to distinguish between various consonants that have the same shape and form. However, from then onwards, this language experienced a change of course and dots, as well as inflection marks, came to be incorporated into its text. This signified the dawn of a new period for Arabic scripts. The start of this era coincides with the rule of al-Ḥajjāj ibn Yūsuf al-Thaqafī, governor of Iraq under the Umayyad ruler ʿAbd al-Malik ibn Marwān (75-86 A.H.). This fundamental innovation, which made differentiation between various words possible, was pioneered by Yaḥyā ibn Yaʿmur and Naṣr ibn ʿĀṣim. Both these individuals were students of Abū'l-Aswad al-Du'alī.[2] The basic catalyst behind this textual advancement was the ever growing number of non-Arab Muslims. These people did not understand the Arabic language naturally and, therefore, needed relevant symbols guiding them towards proper Arabic pronunciation. Some such individuals, despite being prone to severe mistakes in reading and understanding the Holy Qur'ān, had attained the status of reciters and scholars within society. The errors they made would have, inevitably, created unwanted changes within the holy book of Islam.

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1. ***Dā'irat al-Maʿārif al-Qarn al-ʿIshrīn***, vol. 3, pg. 621; Georgi Zaydān, ***Tārīkh al-Tamaddun al-Islāmī***, vol. 3, pg 58-60, Ibn Khuldūn, ***al-Muqaddimah***, pg. 417-421; Khalīl Yaḥyā al-Nāmī, ***Aṣl al-Khaṭṭ al-ʿArabī***, vol. 3; Turkī ʿAṭiyyah ʿAbbūd, ***Al-Khaṭṭ al-ʿArabī al-Islāmī***, pg. 22; Muḥammad Ṭāhir al-Mālikī al-Kurdī, ***Tārīkh al-Khaṭṭ al-ʿArabī wa-Ādābuhū***, pg. 54.
2. ***Dā'irat al-Maʿārif al-Qarn al-ʿIshrīn***, vol. 3, pg. 722; ***Manāhil al-ʿIrfān***, vol. 1, pg. 399-400; ***Tārīkh al-Qur'ān***, pg. 68.

This issue forced the Muslims community into taking serious steps towards resolving the crisis at hand.

Abū-Aḥmad al-ʿAskarī[1] reports that the ʿUthmānic codex remained in usage for about forty years, until the time of ʿAbd al-Malik ibn Marwān. Over this period, the correct recitation of the Qur'ān became polluted with numerous errors, especially amongst the peoples of Iraq. Al-Ḥajjāj ibn Yūsuf was troubled by this fact and directed his scribes to create ways and means in order to make differentiation between words of similar structure possible. It is said that Naṣr ibn ʿĀṣim took this task upon himself, and introduced dots into the Arabic alphabets.[2] Al-Zarqānī says, "The first individuals to introduce dots into Qur'ānic codices were the two students of Abū'l-Aswad al-Du'alī, Yaḥyā ibn Yaʿmur and Naṣr ibn ʿĀṣim."[3]

Structure and the Inclusion of Symbols

The Arabic script in its original form, apart from being devoid of dots, also lacked a proper alphabet structure. In addition, it was empty of any grammatical markings as well. In such a situation, it was natural for the early codices to be empty of inflection marks or any other sort of case symbolism. However, in the beginnings of Islamic history most people read the Qur'ān from memory and, keeping in mind the large number of Arab reciters and memorizers that existed within Muslim society, the Holy Qur'ān's recitation remained protected from any distortions. This is especially true when we incorporate into our analysis the exceptional amount of care that the early Muslim community would put into learning the Holy Qur'ān. Furthermore, we know that during this given era, with the existence of numerous individuals who had lived with the Prophet (ṣ) himself or with one of his close companions, the opportunity for learning the Holy Qur'ān's correct recitation was amply available, despite the problems mentioned earlier with regard to the codices.

Nonetheless, in the second half of the first century, with the advent of non-Arab Muslims who were new to the Arabic language, distortions and mistakes became rampant. Therefore, the creation of marks and symbols within Arabic text, to clearly define every aspect of Qur'ānic recitation, was made increasingly crucial. As an example, Arabs would naturally pronounce the word كتب as *kataba* (the active tense) while reciting the following verse:

1. ***Al-Taṣḥīf wa'l-Taḥrīf,*** pg. 13.
2. Ibn Khallakān, ***Wafiyyāt al-Aʿyān***, vol. 2, pg. 32.
3. ***Manāhil al-ʿIrfān***, vol. 1, pg. 399.

﴿ وَإِذَا جَآءَكَ ٱلَّذِينَ يُؤۡمِنُونَ بِـَٔايَٰتِنَا فَقُلۡ سَلَٰمٌ عَلَيۡكُمۡ كَتَبَ رَبُّكُمۡ عَلَىٰ نَفۡسِهِ ٱلرَّحۡمَةَ أَنَّهُۥ مَنۡ عَمِلَ مِنكُمۡ سُوٓءَۢا بِجَهَٰلَةٖ ثُمَّ تَابَ مِنۢ بَعۡدِهِۦ وَأَصۡلَحَ فَأَنَّهُۥ غَفُورٞ رَّحِيمٞ ﴾

"And when those who believe in Our communications come to you, say: Peace be on you, your Lord has ordained mercy on Himself, (so) that if any one of you does evil in ignorance, then turns after that and acts aright, then He is Forgiving, Merciful."[1]

Whereas, they would automatically pronounce the same word as *kutiba* (the passive tense) while reciting the following verse:

﴿ يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُواْ كُتِبَ عَلَيۡكُمُ ٱلصِّيَامُ كَمَا كُتِبَ عَلَى ٱلَّذِينَ مِن قَبۡلِكُمۡ لَعَلَّكُمۡ تَتَّقُونَ ﴾

"O you who believe! Fasting is prescribed for you, as it was prescribed for those before you, so that you may guard (against evil)."[2]

Therefore, the presence or absence of symbols and inflections marks made little or no difference for native Arab speakers. However, if the same situation presented itself to non-Arabs, they would find themselves completely confused and would not know whether to recite the said word in its active or passive form. One such case, recorded within history, occurred when Abūl-Aswad al-Du'alī heard someone reciting this verse from the Holy Qur'ān:

﴿ وَأَذَٰنٞ مِّنَ ٱللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِۦٓ إِلَى ٱلنَّاسِ يَوۡمَ ٱلۡحَجِّ ٱلۡأَكۡبَرِ أَنَّ ٱللَّهَ بَرِيٓءٞ مِّنَ ٱلۡمُشۡرِكِينَ وَرَسُولُهُۥ فَإِن تُبۡتُمۡ فَهُوَ خَيۡرٞ لَّكُمۡ وَإِن تَوَلَّيۡتُمۡ فَٱعۡلَمُوٓاْ أَنَّكُمۡ غَيۡرُ مُعۡجِزِي ٱللَّهِ وَبَشِّرِ ٱلَّذِينَ كَفَرُواْ بِعَذَابٍ أَلِيمٍ ﴾

"And an announcement from Allah and His Apostle to the people on the day of the greater pilgrimage, that Allah and His Apostle are free from liability to the idolaters; therefore if you repent, it will be better for you, and if you turn back, then know that you will not weaken Allah; and announce painful punishment to those who disbelieve."[3]

The person in question pronounced the word *rasūluhū* in the genitive, rather than the nominative, case thereby changing the meaning of the verse from the one given above to something entirely different. This recitational distortion rendered the verse such, that it now meant this: "*Allah is free from liability to the idolaters and to his Apostle.*" Upon witnessing such an

1. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Anʿām (6:54).
2. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Baqarah (2:183).
3. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Tawbah (9:3).

extreme and outright mistake being made, Abū'l-Aswad al-Du'alī remarked, "I had never imagined that the situation would deteriorate to such an extent." As a response, he decided to relate his experience to the governor of al-Kūfah who, at that time, was Ziyād ibn Abīh (Ziyād held this position from 50 to 53 A.H.). Before this particular event had taken place, Ziyād had already discussed the inclusion of marks and symbols into Qur'ānic codices with Abū'l-Aswad al-Du'alī, and had asked him to take charge of this crucial task but the latter had declined. However, having beheld the gravity of the issue personally, Abū'l-Aswad changed his mind[1] and declared, "I shall surely perform that which the Amīr has commanded." To begin his work, Abū'l-Aswad demanded that an expert scribe be appointed to diligently take down every word that he said. The authorities nominated a person from the tribe of ʿAbd-Qays, but Abū'l-Aswad was not satisfied with his handiwork. As a result, another individual, with similar expertise, was found and placed under Abū'l-Aswad's wing. This new arrangement worked much better and, subsequently, the project began to take shape.

Abū'l-Aswad addressed the new scribe, saying, "If I pronounce a letter in a manner that my mouth opens up during its pronunciation, you must inscribe this alphabet by placing a dot directly above it. Similarly, if I recite a letter in a manner that my lips curl up during its pronunciation, you are to place a dot right in front of that particular letter. Finally, if I were to articulate a letter in a manner that my lips fall down during its pronunciation, you must position a dot right underneath this letter."[2]

In addition to the above, Ibn ʿAyyāḍ also includes this statement to the list of instructions given by Abū'l-Aswad al-Du'alī, "If I were to pronounce an alphabet by creating its sound through my nose (called *ghunnah* in recitational jargon), then you are directed to signify this fact using two dots instead of one."[3]

From then onwards, the people would use these dots to understand the correct pronunciation of words within the Qur'ān. These dots were inscribed in a color different from the color of the text itself. Therefore, in most codices they were inscribed in red. In fact, the color differentiation came about after Naṣr ibn ʿĀṣim introduced dots as parts of the words themselves.

As has been discussed earlier, Naṣr's work enabled readers to differentiate between letters of similar structure, whereas the efforts of his teacher, Abū'l-Aswad, aided readers in deducing the correct pronunciation and grammatical

1. Some say that the individual Abu'l-Aswad met was, in fact, an agent sent deliberately by Ziyād in order to convince the first about the gravity of the said affair.
2. ***Al-Fahrist*** Part 1 from Essay 2, pg. 46.
3. Sayyid Ḥasan al-Ṣadr, ***Taṣḥīḥ al-Shīʿah li-ʿUlūm al-Islām***, pg. 52.

case of Qur'ānic words. The dots placed by Abū'l-Aswad are technically called *ḥarakah* (a category of supplementary diacritics dealing with vowel marks), while the dots placed by Naṣr are known as *iʿjām* (or consonant pointing diacritics).Therefore, when both types of dots came together, the need to differentiate between them became evident. As a result, dots signifying pronunciation and grammatical case were inscribed in a color other than the color of the text itself.

Georgi Zaydān reports that he saw a codex bearing these very characteristics in the Dār al-Kutub Library in Egypt. He says, "This codex initially rested in the ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ Mosque near Cairo and is from amongst the oldest codices of its kind. Its pages are big and its text is inscribed in black ink. However, the dots are red in color and are placed in a manner that corresponds exactly to what we find described in the account of Abū'l-Aswad. A dot placed above a letter signified a *fatḥah* (a symbol representing a short /a/), a dot placed beneath a letter represented a *kasrah* (a symbol suggestive of a short /i/) and a dot placed in front of a letter described a *ḍammah* (a symbol signifying a short /u/)."[1]

In Andalusia, codices were inscribed in four colors. In these codices black was used for the main text, red for the dots representing vowel marks, yellow for *hamzah* or glottal stop, and green for *alif alwaṣl* (the alphabet alif that is sometimes left unpronounced)[2]

Final Complementary Changes

Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī says, "In the early days, supplementary diacritic vowel marks were represented by dots. A dot placed before a given letter represented *fatḥah*, a dot positioned after a certain letter represented *ḍammah* and a dot inscribed underneath a said letter signified *kasrah*."

However, marks used today for this same purpose are those introduced by al-Khalīl ibn Aḥmad al-Farāhīdī. In this particular system, *fatḥah* is represented by a diagonal short stroke above the relevant letter, and *kasrah* is shown by a similar stroke placed underneath the letter in question. The symbol signifying *ḍammah*, in Al-Farāhīdī's system, was a small *wāw* (و) placed directly above a letter. Likewise, the double vowel diacritic called *tanwīn* or nunation (indicating the presence of an affixal /n/ occurring at the end of a word) was represented by placing a double version of the relevant symbol above or below the pertinent letter. Al-Suyūṭī adds, "The first individual to

1. ***Tārīkh al-Tamaddun al-Islāmī***, vol. 3, pg. 61.
2. ***Al-Khaṭṭ al-ʿArabī al-Islāmī***, pg. 27 (narrating the speech of Abū-ʿUmar and ʿUthmān ibn Saʿīd al-Dāʾinī, as quoted in the book ***al-Muqniʿ fī Rasm al-Maṣāḥif***) Also refer to ***Tārīkh al-Qur'ān***, pg. 68.

coin symbols for *hamzah* (the glottal stop) and the *tashdīd* (germination) was al-Khalīl ibn Aḥmad."[1]

As time passed, the interest of the people with regard to the Holy Qur'ān increased even further and this led to further changes in the Arabic script. By the third century, Arabic text and style of writing had evolved to a point where its beauty had been greatly increased. In fact, people competed with each other in beautifying the Holy Qur'ān and adding indicative symbols to its text. The head of the alphabet *khā'* (خ) was used to signify that the consonant it was attached to was not followed by a vowel (this being characteristic of CVC syllables or "consonant-vowel-consonant" syllables). They used this particular symbol because they wanted to indicate that such consonants were *akhaff* (اخف) or lighter in pronunciation than vowels. Others incorporated the head of the alphabet *mīm* (مـ) for the same purpose. Similarly, for geminated consonants they used a symbol that looked like the Latin "w" and for *alif al-waṣl* they incorporated a symbol constructed by adding a small *ṣād* (ص) on top of the alphabet *alif* (ا). All these developments took upon themselves the shape of a great and prospering industry, instigating the creation of further refinements in the Arabic script.[2]

It has also been reported that the division of the Holy Qur'ān into ten or five parts, as well as its classification into separate sections for ease of recitation, was carried out upon the orders of the ʿAbbāsid ruler al-Ma'mūn. In separate narrations, we find al-Ḥajjāj accredited with this innovation. Aḥmad ibn al-Ḥusayn says, "Al-Ḥajjāj gathered the reciters of al-Baṣrah into one place, and, after having chosen a group from amongst them to fulfill his commands, told them to count the letters of the Holy Qur'ān. Upon completing their mission, they reported that the Qur'ān contained 77,439 words and 323,015 (or, according to another narration, 340,740) letters. In addition to this information, they reported that the first half of the Qur'ān ended with the word (وَلْيَتَلَطَّفْ) in Sūrah al-Kahf, and that the number of total verses in the Holy Book (according to one tradition) was 6,236.

A famous opinion suggests that the division of the Holy Qur'ān into 120 portions and 30 sections, so as to make its recitation easier, was carried out by Islamic centers of learning. The renowned scholar of Arabic literature and Qur'ānic recitation, Abū'l-Ḥasan ʿAlī ibn Muḥammad al-Sakhawī (born 643 A.H.), writes in his book *Jamāl al-Qurrā'* that the division of the Qur'ān into 30 sections, each consisting of 12 parts (which makes 360 portions in total), was pioneered by an academic named Abū-ʿUthmān ʿAmr ibn ʿUbayd (born

1. ***Al-Itqān***, vol. 2, pg. 171; Abū-ʿUmar and al-Dā'inī, ***Kitāb al-Nuqaṭ***, pg. 133.
2. ***Taṣḥīḥ al-Shīʿah li-ʿUlūm al-Islām***, pg. 52. (narrating the text of Salāmah ibn ʿAyyāḍ as cited in the book ***al-Miṣbāḥ***)

144 A.H.). Al-Sakhawī says, "He performed this task upon the request of the Abbasid ruler al-Manṣūr, who wanted the Holy Qur'ān to be divided up into sections, equal to the number of days within one calendar year, so that the process of memorization and daily recitation could be simplified. Abū-ʿUthmān responded positively to the ruler's request. He performed this division in a systematic manner and clearly demarcated the end of each section using a horizontal line. Al-Manṣūr used this system to teach the Qur'ān to his own son al-Mahdī and, subsequently, the people followed suit."[1]

The lengthiest and largest chapter of the Holy Qur'ān is Sūrah al-Baqarah, whereas the shortest is Sūrah al-Kawthar. Likewise, the lengthiest verse in the Qur'ān is verse 282 of Sūrah al-Baqarah, known as Āyah al-Dayn (Verse of Loan). This verse consists of 128 words and 540 letters. The shortest verse is *wa'lḍḍuḥā* (وَالضُّحَى) and, subsequently, *wa'l-fajr* (وَالْفَجْرِ). The lengthiest word in the Holy Book is *fa'asqaynākumūhu* (فَأَسْقَيْنَاكُمُوهُ) which exists in verse 33 of Sūrah al-Ḥijr. This word is made up of 11 alphabets.[2]

Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, in his book *al-Musnad*, quotes Aws ibn Ḥudhayfah as having said: "I was amongst a group of men from the tribe of Banū-Mālik who had embraced Islam and had come to meet the Holy Prophet (ṣ). We had been given a tent and the Prophet (ṣ) would visit us every day on his way back from the mosque. He would sit with us after the evening prayer and would speak of the behavior that the people of Makkah had displayed towards him, before and after his migration to al-Madīnah. One night he came to us later than usual and we asked him the cause of this delay. He said, 'A portion of the Holy Qur'ān had been brought to me and I decided to finish the task required, with regard to this portion, before leaving the mosque.' Subsequently, we asked the companions of the Holy Prophet (ṣ), 'How have you divided the Qur'ān into sections?' They replied, 'We have divided the Qur'ān into seven sections, each section being a collection of three, five, seven, nine, eleven and thirteen chapters respectively. The last section, which is also the lengthiest, starts from Sūrah Qāf and continues until the end of the Qur'ān.'"[3]

Apparently, the last portion of this narration belongs to Aws himself rather than the companions. He probably added this sentence as a complementary statement to what the companions had talked about regarding the Qur'ān's division. We say this because we believe the Holy Qur'ān did not exist in a codical form at that time. However, the chapters had all been completed,

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1. ***Jamāl al-Qurrā' wa-Kamāl al-Iqrā',*** vol. 1, pg. 378-379 - Beirut, 1993.
2. ***Al-Burhān***, vol. 1, pg. 249&252.
3. ***Musnad Aḥmad***, vol. 4, pg. 343.

and, therefore, they had also been classified into separate and equal sections so as to simplify the process of recitation.

1. Spelling Mistakes: Text is a tool used to transfer a given meaning or concept in a way that it yields the exact same results as transferring the said meaning via spoken words. In fact, text is a written representation of speech and, therefore, written words must correspond precisely to their respective vocal counterparts. As a result, there must not exist any discrepancy between the written word and its equivalent intonated twin.

On the other hand, laws governing written texts are not always in tune with rules presiding over speech. However, as long as these differences are universally known and consistently applied, they do not act as agents diverging the course of a writer's intended meaning away from what he has actually penned down in written form.

The ʿUthmānic codex, nevertheless, is inscribed in a manner that goes against this principle. It is inundated with spelling mistakes and contradictions, to the extent that if it were not for the practice of memorization and recitation through memory, the correct pronunciation of many Qur'ānic words would have become impossible.

The reason behind this fact, as we have already discussed, was that the Arabs were entirely new to the art of writing. Only a handful of individuals could actually write, and even they were bound by limitations dictated upon them by the embryonic nature of early Arabic script. A brief analysis of early Arabic texts speaks volumes with respect to this issue.[1] Apart from this, the persons nominated by ʿUthmān for carrying out the task of inscription were, in fact, exceptionally unskilled even by the rudimentary standards of that day.

We have already discussed ʿUthmān's remarks when the final copy of the first codex was brought to him for approval. After praising the committee's efforts, he moved on to comment upon the numerous spelling mistakes that he saw scattered across the pages of this official Qur'ān. These were mistakes that every literate Arab could see and correct. Subsequently, he said, "If a person from the tribe of Hudhayl had been responsible for the dictation and an individual from the tribe of Thaqīf had been entrusted with the task of inscription, such mistakes would not have taken place." Thus, ʿUthmān, in having failed to appoint the most capable experts to this project, stands guilty of exercising extreme negligence vis-à-vis a work of colossal significance.

Al-Thaʿlabī, in his exegesis, when explaining verse 63 of Sūrah Ṭā-Hā, says,

1. Ibn Khuldūn, ***al-Muqaddimah,*** pg. 419&438.

"'Uthmān remarked, 'There are mistakes in this codex that no Arab would ever commit while speaking'. So, they asked him, 'Will you not correct them?' To which he replied, 'Such a change is not necessary. These mistakes neither change the legal to the illegal, nor deem the prohibited to be lawful.'"[1]

Ibn Rūzbahān makes this comment while discussing the said issue, "'Uthmān did not correct the words in question because he saw himself duty bound to preserve the originally recorded shape of all Qur'ānic words. These words had been recorded within the earlier codices in exactly the same way and, therefore, it was not permissible to change them. Apart from this, they were coherent with some tribal Arabic dialects (i.e. they were not entirely incorrect) and, thus, did not need rectification."[2]

We, however, are incapable of comprehending what Ibn Rūzbahān says, since he seems to be contradicting himself. First, he says that the erroneous words had existed, in the exact same shape, within other codices. We do not know which codices he means. Secondly, we fail to understand how the veracity of this claim can exist beside his subsequent argument, in which he proclaims that these words were in accordance with niche Arab dialects. Whatever the case maybe, the laxity displayed by the people involved in this task, especially the ones at the helm of affairs, became the source of greater problems for the Muslim nation for years to come. Once committed, these mistakes could not be easily corrected. This is because such an act of correction would have become a precedent, and, later on, would have been used by various enemies in order to introduce distortions and corruptions into the word of God.

Imam ʿAlī (ʿa), speaking with reference to this very fact, says, "Surely, the Qur'ān will not move today, nor will it change." Therefore, the Holy Qur'ān has been accepted by all Muslims as the foundation of Islamic law till the end of time.

Spelling Mistakes and Contradictions

The existence of spelling mistakes in the Holy Qur'ān did not cause any change in its essence or glory. This is because:

Firstly, the actuality of the Holy Qur'ān is that which is recited, not that which is written down. Whatever shape the inscription may take, no harm is made as long as the recitation stays true to what the Prophet (ṣ) and the companions recited in their own time. It is undeniable that the Holy Qur'ān has been memorized, continuously, by Muslims from the era of the Holy

1. Muẓaffar al-, Muḥammad Ḥasan, ***Dalā'il al-Ṣidq***, vol. 3, pg. 196.
2. Ibid, vol. 3, pg. 197.

Prophet (ṣ) to this very day.

Secondly, any inscription errors in the Qur'ānic codex are the handiwork of the early scribes. These mistakes do not represent flaws in the Qur'ān itself. As God, himself, declares:

﴿ لَّا يَأۡتِيهِ ٱلۡبَٰطِلُ مِنۢ بَيۡنِ يَدَيۡهِ وَلَا مِنۡ خَلۡفِهِۦۖ تَنزِيلٞ مِّنۡ حَكِيمٍ حَمِيدٖ ﴾

"Falsehood shall not come to it from before it nor from behind it; a revelation from the Wise, the Praised One." [1]

Thirdly, the codices remained uncorrected for centuries, but this fact did not affect the Muslim claim about the immutability and purity of the Holy Qur'ān. The said errors were, in essence, inconsequential. Even though their correction would have been more suitable, they were left untouched to preserve the honor of the early scribes.

Herein, we shall present some of these lapses:

CHAPTER AND VERSE	WORDS SPELLED INCORRECTLY	WORDS SPELLED CORRECTLY
Al-Baqarah 164	وَاخْتِلفِ الّيل والنَّهارِ	وَٱختِلاف اللّيلِ والنَّهارِ
Al-Mā'idah 109	عَلّمُ الْغُيُوبِ	عَلّامُ
Al-Anʿām 5	يَأْتيهِمْ اَنْبؤُا	انْباءُ
Al- Anʿām 26	وَيَنْؤنَ عَنْهُ	يَنْاونَ عَنْهُ
Al-Anʿām 52	بِالْغداوةِ	بِالْغَداةِ
Al-Anʿām 94	فيكم شُرَكؤُا	شُرَكاءُ
Hūd 87	مانَشؤُا	مانشاؤا
Yūsuf 87	إنَّهُ لا يايْئَسُ	لايَيْأَسُ
Ibrāhīm 9	اَلَمْ يَأْتِكُمْ نَبَؤُا	نَبَأ

1. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah Fuṣṣilat (41:42).

Ibrāhīm 21	فَقَالَ الضُّعَفٰٓؤُا	اَلضُّعَفاءُ
Al-Kahf 23	وَلاتَقُولَنَّ لِشَاْىء	لِشَيْءٍ
Al-Kahf 77	وَلَوشِئْتُ لَتَّخَذْتَ	لاتَّخذْتَ
Ṭā-Hā 94	قالَ يَبْنَؤُمَّاَ	يَاابْنَ اُمُّ
Al-Naml 21	اَوْلا اذْبَحَنَّهُ	لَأَذْبَحَنَّهُ
Al-Naml 29	يا اَيُّهَاالْمَلَؤُا	الْمَلأُ
Al-Rūm 13	شُفَعؤُا	شُفَعاءُ
Al-Ṣāffāt 106	لَهُوَاَلْبَلؤُالْمبينُ	اَلْبَلاءُ
Ṣād 13	وَاَصْحابُ لْئَيْكَةِ	الأيْكَةِ
Al-Zumar 69	و جاىءَبالنَّبيّينَ	وجيءَ
Ghāfir 50	وَمادُعؤُاالكافِرين	وَمادُعاءُ

Once we understand that the codices of that day were utterly devoid of any diacritic marks and symbols, we begin to appreciate the tremendous difficultly faced by a reader when trying to decipher these manuscripts. How was a common reader supposed to deduce that the *alif* (ا) in the word "لااذبحنه", or the *yā* (ي) in "بأييد", or *wāw* (و) in "نشؤا" were silent, when no such indication presented itself in the text.

Even more strange is the presence of contradictions in the ʿUthmānic codex. Instances of one single word were inscribed in different manners in separate places of the manuscript. This fact, itself, speaks volumes about the second-rate skills of the scribes entrusted with this text. These original writers were so unaware of even the most basic fundamentals of inscription that they failed to create and maintain one consistent system of spellings within the texts they penned down. Therefore, we see that the word بسطة, with a *sīn* (س), occurring in verse 247 of Sūrah al-Baqarah, has been inscribed in verse 69 of Sūrah al-Aʿrāf as بصطة, with a *ṣād* (ص). Similarly, the word يبسط, with a *sīn* (س), occurring in verse 26 of Sūrah al-Raʿd, has been spelled with *ṣād*

(ص) in verse 245 of Sūrah al-Baqarah. Such mutually contradictory spellings were abundant in the ʿUthmānic codex. We shall present some of them in the table below.

WORDS SPELLED INCORRECTLY	WORDS SPELLED CORRECTLY
لَو شِئْتَ لَتَّخَذْتَ	اِذاً لاَتَخَذُوكَ
اَصْحابُ لْئَيْكَةِ	اَصْحابُ الأيْكةِ
فَقالَ الضُّعَفؤُا	لَيْسَ عَلَى الضُّعَفاء
فَلايَسْتَئْخِرُّونَ ساعَةً	لايَسْتَأْخِرُونَ ساعَةً
وَمادُعؤُاالْكافِرينَ	وَمادُعاءُالكافِرينَ
لَيْسَ بِظَلّامٍ لِلْعَبيدِ	لَيْسَ بِظَلّامٍ لِلْعَبيدِ
ضَرَبُؤا لَكَ الْاَمثلَ	ضَرَبُوالَكَ الْأَمْثالَ
وَيَمْحُ اللهُ الباطِلَ	وَيَمْحُواللهُ مايَشاء
فَاَحْيكُمْ ثُمَّ يُميتُكُمْ	اَحْياكُمْ ثمَّ يُميتُكُمْ
إى لفِهِمْ رِحْلَةَ	لِإيلفِ قُريْشٍ
قَالَ يَبْنَؤُمَّ	قَالَ ابْنَ اُمَّ
فى اَمْوالِنا مانَشؤا	فِى الاَرْحامِ مانَشاءُ
وَإنْ تَعُدُّوانِعْمَتَ الله	وَإنْ تَعُدُّوانِعْمَةَالله
فَلَنْ تَجِدَ لِسُنَّتِ الله	وَلَنْ تَجِدَ لِسُنَّةِ الله
عَلى بَيِّنَتٍ مِنْهُ	عَلى بَيِنَةٍ مِنْ رَبِّهِ
لَدَاالباب	لَدَى الْحَناجِرِ
طَغَاالْماءُ	انّهُ طَغى
وَلاتَقُولَنَّ لِشَأْىءٍ	وَكانَ اللهُ عَلى كُلِّ شَىْءٍ
فَقالَ الْمَلَؤُا	وَقالَ الْمَلَأُ
اَيُّهَ الثَّقَلانِ	اَيُهَاالْمُجْرِمُونَ

Theories Marked by Exaggerations

Some ultra-conservative scholars, characterized by their unflinching defense of all things ancient, argue that the script used within classical codices (along with all the mistakes and incoherencies they contained) was a script used because of the explicit instructions given by the Holy Prophet (ṣ) in this regard. They hold that the early scribes had no involvement in the creation of these instances, and that these cases were indicative of secrets known only to God.

Ibn al-Mubārak quotes his teacher, ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz al-Dabbāgh, as such: "The script of the Qur'ān is a secret from amongst the secrets of God, established by the Holy Prophet (ṣ) himself. He explicitly commanded the scribes to write these words in particular ways. The scribes, themselves, would neither go beyond the orders of the Holy Prophet (ṣ), nor would they fall short of what they were commanded to do… the companions, and other people, did not have the slightest involvement in the script of the Holy Qur'ān. It was set exclusively by the Prophet (ṣ) himself. He commanded them to inscribe a particular word, sometimes with a silent *alif* and sometimes without it. All these instances were indicative of mysterious secrets interwoven into the Qur'ānic text; secrets that baffle the mind. Secrets from amongst the secrets of God, found only in the Qur'ān and not in other divine books. In fact, the script of the Qur'ān is as much a miracle as the sequence of the Holy Book's chapters.

How can the human mind dream of comprehending the grave secrets that are involved in the spelling of مِائَة with *alif*, and فئة without *alif*? (Then he goes on to quote examples of other instances of incoherent spellings in the early codices)…

All these are secrets of the divine, and pearls from the superior wisdom of the Holy Prophet (ṣ), hidden from the human intellect. They are inner wonders, and cannot be understood except with God's personal blessing. They are, in reality, similar to the secrets encoded into the disjointed letters that form the start of various chapters. Few have ever comprehended their significance. Similarly, the script of the Holy Qur'ān is also a part of this mystery."[1]

Some have even tried to decipher the presumed secrets hidden in these incoherencies, and have reported their opinions in painstaking manners. Some have said that the extra *alif* in لاذبحنه indicates that the actual sacrifice did not take place. Similarly, the extra *yā'* ي in وَالسَّمَاءَ بَنَيْنَاهَا بِأَيْيْدٍ indicates the greatness of divine power, in that no other power could ever create the skies.

1. ***Manāhil al-ʿIrfān***, vol. 1, pg. 375-376.

This process is based on a principle in Arabic literature wherein it is said: "The multiplicity of sources (letters) is evidence towards the multiplicity of meanings."[1]

Abū'l-ʿAbbās al-Marākishī, popularly known as Ibn al-Bannā' (deceased 721 A.H.), discusses this issue in great depth in his book *ʿUnwān al-Dalīl fī Marsūm al-Tanzīl*. He explains that these incoherencies are indicative of metaphysical secrets dealing with hidden worlds, levels of existence and other such mysterious concepts. Herein we have quoted an excerpt from his book to present the extent of his exaggerations, and the strange arguments that he has created so as to prove the veracity of his theory regarding these spelling mistakes.

He says: "The addition of *alif* in لااذبحنه shows that the sacrifice in question is greater that the punishment spoken of in the beginning of the said verse."

﴿ لَأُعَذِّبَنَّهُۥ عَذَابًا شَدِيدًا أَوْ لَأَاْذْبَحَنَّهُۥٓ أَوْ لَيَأْتِيَنِّى بِسُلْطَٰنٍ مُّبِينٍ ﴾

"I will most certainly punish him with a severe punishment, or kill him, or he shall bring to me a clear plea."[2]

"The *alif* in يرجوا and يدعوا has been added so as to indicate that the verb is heavier, in this case, than a noun. This is because the verb, in this instance, includes the subject as well. From this perspective, if we needed to indicate the opposite for a verb, we would remove its *alif*, even though it should have had one due to its plural nature. An example is this verse, wherein *alif* has been removed from سعوا to indicate that the efforts being spoken of are all in vain:

﴿ وَٱلَّذِينَ سَعَوْ فِىٓ ءَايَٰتِنَا مُعَٰجِزِينَ أُوْلَٰٓئِكَ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ مِّن رِّجْزٍ أَلِيمٌ ﴾

"And (as for) those who strive hard in opposing Our communications, these it is for whom is a painful chastisement of an evil kind."[3]

"In the following verse, *alif* has been added after the *hamzah* to signify that the thing in question is brighter and whiter than a precious pearl.

1. Ibn Khuldūn, ***al-Muqaddimah***, pg. 419; ***Manāhil al-ʿIrfān***, vol. 1, pg. 368.
2. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Naml (27:21).
3. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah Saba' (34:5).

﴿كَأَمۡثَٰلِ ٱللُّؤۡلُوِ ٱلۡمَكۡنُونِ﴾

"The like of the hidden pearls:"[1]

Therefore, we do not find *alif* added in the verse below:

﴿ وَيَطُوفُ عَلَيۡهِمۡ غِلۡمَانٌ لَّهُمۡ كَأَنَّهُمۡ لُؤۡلُؤٞ مَّكۡنُونٞ﴾

"And round them shall go boys of theirs as if they were hidden pearls."[2]

"An additional *alif* exists in مائة but not in فئة because the first is indicative of double multiplicities, one in terms of units and the other in terms of tens."

"In the following verse:

﴿ وَجِاْيٓءَ يَوۡمَئِذِۭ بِجَهَنَّمَۚ يَوۡمَئِذِۭ يَتَذَكَّرُ ٱلۡإِنسَٰنُ وَأَنَّىٰ لَهُ ٱلذِّكۡرَىٰ﴾

"And hell is made to appear on that day. On that day shall man be mindful, and what shall being mindful (then) avail him?"[3]

An additional *alif* appears and the spellings change to وجايء so as to indicate that the *arrival* in question is an apparent and unambiguous arrival."

"In the verse:

﴿ خُلِقَ ٱلۡإِنسَٰنُ مِنۡ عَجَلٖۚ سَأُوْرِيكُمۡ ءَايَٰتِي فَلَا تَسۡتَعۡجِلُونِ﴾

"Man is created of haste; now will I show to you My signs, therefore do not ask Me to hasten (them) on."[4]

An additional *wāw* (و) appears in سأوريكم to indicate that the world of existence is in the highest level of clarity,"

"In the verse:

﴿ وَٱلسَّمَآءَ بَنَيۡنَٰهَا بِأَيۡيْدٖ وَإِنَّا لَمُوسِعُونَ﴾

"And the heaven, We raised it high with power, and most surely We are the makers of things ample."[5]

1. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Wāqiʿah (56:23).
2. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Ṭūr (52:24).
3. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Fajr (89:23).
4. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Anbiyā' (21:37).
5. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Dhāriyāt (51:47).

Yā' (ي) has been added, spelling the word بايید, so as to differentiate between the word in question and الايدي, the plural form of يد, which means hands. This is because God wants to emphasize that he made the heavens using his magnificent power and strength, an act that cannot be achieved through *hands* as we understand them."

"In the verse:

﴿ سَنَدۡعُ ٱلزَّبَانِيَةَ ﴾

"We too would summon the braves of the army."[1]

Wāw (و) has been dropped, so as to show that the action in question shall take place with extreme speed."

"In the verse:

﴿ وَيَدۡعُ ٱلۡإِنسَٰنُ بِٱلشَّرِّ دُعَآءَهُۥ بِٱلۡخَيۡرِۖ وَكَانَ ٱلۡإِنسَٰنُ عَجُولاً ﴾

"And man prays for evil as he ought to pray for good, and man is ever hasty."[2]

Wāw (و) has been deleted to show that perpetrating sinful acts is easy for man, and that he makes haste in committing sins, just as he procrastinates in the performance of virtues."

"In this verse:

﴿ وَقَالَ لَهُمۡ نَبِيُّهُمۡ إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ قَدۡ بَعَثَ لَكُمۡ طَالُوتَ مَلِكاۚ قَالُوٓاْ أَنَّىٰ يَكُونُ لَهُ ٱلۡمُلۡكُ عَلَيۡنَا وَنَحۡنُ أَحَقُّ بِٱلۡمُلۡكِ مِنۡهُ وَلَمۡ يُؤۡتَ سَعَةٗ مِّنَ ٱلۡمَالِۚ قَالَ إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ ٱصۡطَفَىٰهُ عَلَيۡكُمۡ وَزَادَهُۥ بَسۡطَةٗ فِي ٱلۡعِلۡمِ وَٱلۡجِسۡمِۖ وَٱللَّهُ يُؤۡتِي مُلۡكَهُۥ مَن يَشَآءُۚ وَٱللَّهُ وَٰسِعٌ عَلِيمٞ ﴾

"And their prophet said to them: Surely Allah has raised Talut to be a king over you. They said: How can he hold kingship over us while we have a greater right to kingship than he, and he has not been granted an abundance of wealth? He said: Surely Allah has chosen him in preference over you, and He has increased him abundantly in knowledge and physique, and Allah grants His kingdom to whom He pleases, and Allah is Amplegiving, Knowing."[3]

1. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah al-ʿAlaq (96:18).
2. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Isrā' (17:11).
3. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Baqarah (2:247).

The word بسطة appears with *sīn* (س) whereas it appears in verse 69 of Sūrah Al-Aʿrāf with *ṣād* (ص).[1]

﴿ أَوَعَجِبْتُمْ أَن جَآءَكُمْ ذِكْرٌ مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ عَلَىٰ رَجُلٍ مِّنكُمْ لِيُنذِرَكُمْ ۚ وَٱذْكُرُوٓاْ إِذْ جَعَلَكُمْ خُلَفَآءَ مِنۢ بَعْدِ قَوْمِ نُوحٍ وَزَادَكُمْ فِى ٱلْخَلْقِ بَصْۜطَةً ۖ فَٱذْكُرُوٓاْ ءَالَآءَ ٱللَّهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ ﴾

"What! do you wonder that a reminder has come to you from your Lord through a man from among you that he might warn you? And remember when He made you successors after Nuh's people and increased you in excellence in respect of make; therefore remember the benefits of Allah, that you may be successful."[2]

The wisdom herein is that when written with *sīn* (س) it is indicative of particular acts of effort, but when written with *ṣād* (ص) it signifies the concept of "effort" in general."

Dr. Ṣubḥī al-Ṣāliḥ writes this when contemplating upon this particular issue: "There is no doubt that this issue falls clearly within the parameters of exaggeration, and is a result of strong prejudice in favor of the ʿUthmānic codex. It is not logical that the script incorporated into this codex be deemed immutable, a result of prophetic directives. Similarly, it is not rational that it be considered consistent with divine secrets such as those hidden in the disjointed letters that occur at the start of some Qur'ānic chapters. In fact, it is erroneous to compare the issue at hand with the issue related to these disjointed letters. We know with certainty, derived from the absolute multiplicity of narrations, that the latter is indeed God's exact word, whereas no such claim exists with regard to the script found within the ʿUthmānic codex."[3]

Ibn Khaldūn says, "Some uninformed individuals have presumed that the companions were very well-versed in the art of inscription, and that discrepancies found in their codices are not merely mistakes but conscious purposeful acts, each having a distinct cause. They claim that the addition of *alif* in لاذبحنه draws the reader's attention to the fact that the sacrifice in question fell short of taking place. Similarly, the increment of *yā'* (ي) in بأييد, according to their assertion, points towards God's absolute omnipotence and so on. All these arguments are deficient of any sound academic grounding. They are but personal opinions, empty of any evidence or proof, and must, therefore, be ignored."[4]

1. ***Al-Burhān***, vol. 1, pg. 380-430.
2. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Aʿrāf (7:69).
3. ***Mabāḥith fī ʿUlūm al-Qur'ān***, pg. 277.
4. Ibn Khuldūn, ***al-Muqaddimah***; Chapter. 5, pg. 419. Chapter. 6, pg. 438.

Stranger still is that Muḥammad Ṭāhir al-Kurdī (15th century A.H.), while resorting to retrograde argumentation, falls prey to utter acts of exaggeration and romanticization when trying to defend the ʿUthmānic codex's abundant inconsistencies. After listing some of these irregularities, he says:

"We must find out why the early scribes transgressed upon the laws of inscription and refrained from adhering to one homogenous inscription system when writing the said codices. This is a question that must be asked of the individuals delegated by ʿUthmān to this task. However, they have long fallen asleep within the sands of time. It is from here that the scholars have declared: 'The script of the codex is an arcane secret, the truth of which is concealed from all…"

"…It has been wrongfully imagined that the companions were not well-versed in the laws and disciplines of inscription. In fact, it is our solemn belief that these individuals possessed the relevant skills to a degree of satisfaction. To corroborate this claim, we have at our disposal three pieces of evidence.

One: Al-Ālūsī, in his exegesis upon the Qur'ān entitled *Rūḥ al-Maʿānī*, writes, 'Apparently, the companions were quite skilled when dealing with scripts, and were consummate experts in the laws and methodologies of inscription. However, they would consciously act against these guidelines from time to time, and they would do so only if motivated by a greater wisdom or philosophy.'

Two: The companions were responsible for correspondences with various kings and leaders of the world. This indicated that they were accomplished writers, having adorned themselves with in depth knowledge of all rules governing the art of inscription.

Three: ʿUthmān reigned over the caliphate when two hundred and fifty years had already passed since the advent of writing in the Arabian Peninsula. Is it logical to conclude that, even after such a long time had passed, the companions remained unskilled and unaware of proper writing techniques?"[1]

Ibn Khaldūn's verdict, wherein he says, "Do not concern yourself with the utter fantasies cooked up by these ignorant individuals," effectively absolves us of all responsibility vis-à-vis arguments presented by this group of sophists.

Ibn al-Khaṭīb, however, has provided a detailed response to all these contentions, the summary of which has been presented below:

1. Kurdī al-, Muḥammad Ṭāhir ***Tārīkh al-Khaṭṭ al-ʿArabī***, pg. 101-102.

Al-Juʿburī, when speaking of the mistakes found in the ʿUthmānic codex, remarks, "The greatest benefit of these instances was that they acted as obstacles preventing the Ahl al-Kitāb (People of the Book) from reading the Qur'ān."

Ibn al-Khaṭīb responds, "One of the imāms of recitation has aired this unfounded opinion. Having done so, he effectively supported the stance of those who believe that errors must necessarily exist within the Qur'ān, whereas such an idea is self-evidently baseless. In fact, there are numerous verses in the Qur'ān addressing the Ahl al-Kitāb (Jews, Christians and Sabians), calling upon them to embrace God's final creed. Keeping this in mind, how can it be imagined that God intended to prevent them from reading His book?"

Ibn al-Khaṭīb continues, "However, the most reprehensible of abhorrent words that a sane individual could ever utter are those forming the argument presented by Ibn al-Ṣabbāgh. He says, 'The benefits of this script are many and, similarly, its secrets are innumerable. Chief amongst these advantages is the fact that the script in question renders the Qur'ān unreadable, except by those truly worthy of this task. Indeed, the bonafide right of wisdom is that it be protected from the transgressions of those unworthy of it.'"

To this line of argument, Ibn al-Khaṭīb replies thus, "Alas! Shall the Qur'ān now be placed in-line with fields such as witchcraft, geomancy and astrology and its excellence measured by the extent of its knowledge which is ciphered and hidden away? They claim that the Qur'ān must be kept away from the masses, whereas God proclaims:

﴿ وَلَقَدْ يَسَّرْنَا ٱلْقُرْءَانَ لِلذِّكْرِ فَهَلْ مِن مُّدَّكِرٍ ﴾

"And certainly We have made the Qur'ān easy for remembrance, but is there anyone who will mind?"[1]

The fascinations of these fabricators are not but lies and false allegations! The codex's inherent purpose is that it be read by the masses, not that it be turned into a cryptogram, comprehensible only to a select cabal of privileged reciters."

Subsequently, Ibn al-Khaṭīb comments that he has seen many a learned scholar of Arabic grammar and literature reciting the Qur'ān incorrectly due to the problems present in this particular codex.[2]

1. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Qamar (54:17).
2. ***Al-Furqān***, pg. 63-86.

Based on the arguments presented above, Ibn al-Khaṭīb concludes that the script of the Holy Qur'ān must be changed, to make it universally readable. Contemporary scholars and researchers also hold the same opinion and, therefore, they deem the alteration of the old style into the version we see today to be totally permissible. This is because the old style was merely a reflection and a result of the trends existing amongst the scribes of that day, and not an immutable act performed upon the orders of the Holy Prophet (ṣ). Keeping this in mind, it was but natural that the old script be littered with errors spawned of the mediocrity that characterized Arabic inscription during that era. Consequentially, it is but logical for us to replace the old obsolete style with new refined methods that we have at our disposal today. In fact, the replacement of the old obsolete style, with a new universally understandable one, was an act of absolute necessity. Only after such a change had taken place, could the Qur'ān be made available to all people so that it could achieve its true purpose as a source of guidance for all mankind.

Al-Qāḍī Muḥammad ibn al-Ṭayyib Abū-Bakr al-Bāqillānī (deceased 403 A.H.), in his book *al-Intiṣār*, says, "God has not made a particular writing style mandatory upon mankind and has not limited the inscription of Qur'ānic codices to a specific script. Therefore, we are not obliged to refrain from incorporating new textual styles into the said codices. Any claim to the contrary requires that definite evidence be available in support of it. Such a proof is not found anywhere in the Sacred Qur'ān, neither is it accessible within the traditions of the Holy Prophet (ṣ). Similarly, nothing to this effect is derivable based upon the principle of consensus, since no such consensus exists. In fact, the traditions of the Holy Prophet (ṣ) indicate the exact opposite. We find that the Holy Messenger of God (ṣ) did not specify any single textual style when ordering the companions to record divine revelation in written form. This is precisely why we see differences in between the various codices produced in that day. From here we are able to conclude that no such limitation was ever intended, and that the choice of script was left open, so that whatever style seemed the most appropriate could easily and readily be utilized. Therefore, it is permissible to use any textual style that makes recitation and comprehension more accessible; be it the old Kufic script, with its *lām* (ل) looking like *kāf* (ك), or the new fonts that we have at hand today, or even an intermediary stage hovering between the two."

When we observe codical styles varying, to a certain extent, from codex to codex and lacking homogeneity, we understand that this situation was created due to the consent of the people. They did not see this as codical vigilantism, wherein each group created its own methodology; but rather, they understood it to be a mere result of the natural process of seeking and

adhering to techniques, which provide the maximum degree of ease and leisure in recitation and comprehension. Such a process is not troublesome in the least, because no prohibition was ever enforced upon such developments and alterations. That, which has been made obligatory, is correct and precise recitation. Therefore, any tool or pathway leading us to this objective is automatically deemed legitimate and acceptable. Scripts are a mere collection of symbols representing definite words. As long as the word, itself, is successfully conveyed, the particular shape representing it bears little or no consequence.

In short, proponents of immutability, with regard to the script incorporated within the ʿUthmānic codex, have failed to bring forward concrete proofs to substantiate their claims.

The passage quoted above is a summary of the discourse carried out by al-Qāḍī Abū-Bakr al-Bāqillānī with regard to this issue. This summary has been incorporated into the book *Manāhil al-ʿIrfān* by its author Shaykh ʿAbd al-ʿAẓīm al-Zarqānī. After citing the said excerpt, al-Zarqānī attempts to refute al-Bāqillānī's arguments. However, his efforts are largely fruitless, and his weak polemics pale in comparison to al-Bāqillānī's well-grounded and astute deliberations.[1]

Dr. Ṣubḥī al-Ṣāliḥ, in a complimentary note following al-Bāqillānī's discussion, comments: "Al-Qāḍī Abū-Bakr's arguments, concerning this subject, are entirely acceptable. His proofs are well founded and his perspective is very broad indeed. He has not allowed emotional inclinations, in favor of past personalities, to influence his academic judgment in this matter. However, the proponents of immutability with regard to Qur'ānic script have allowed themselves to fall prey to their own emotional proclivities, whereas we know that such attachments are relative and have no place in academic dissertations. They are especially at fault since they allowed such personal predilections to interfere with matters of religious importance. Religious realities are not to be derived from personal emotions and must always be kept unpolluted, away from such contaminants."[2]

In the table that follows, we have presented a comparison of words spelt, using the old system as well as the new one. The said table does not include instances such as the words *al-Raḥmān* الرحمن and *al-Sirāṭ* الصرط, wherein the letter *alif* has been omitted. This is due to the abundance of such instances within the ʿUthmānic codex. Similarly, words wherein *alif* has been replaced with *wāw* (و) or *yā'* (ي), although still pronounced as *alif*, such as *ṣalāt* صلوة and *zakāt* زكوة, have also been left out of this table due to their

1. ***Manāhil al-Qur'ān***, vol. 1, pg. 373-378.
2. ***Mabāḥith fī ʿUlūm al-Qur'ān***, pg. 279.

consistent and continuous repetition. The table only displays one instance of these oft repeated words and signifies their repetitive nature by placing *kāf* (ك) in front of them.

CHAPTER/VERSE	OLD SPELLINGS	CONTEMPORARY SPELLINGS	*CHAPTER/VERSE*	OLD SPELLINGS	CONTEMPORARY SPELLINGS
Al-Baqarah/33	يادم	يآ آدَمُ	Yūsuf/25	لدا	لدى
Al-Baqarah/40	اسراءيل (ك)	اِسْرآئيلَ	Yūsuf/87	تايسوا	تيأسوا
Al-Baqarah/71	الن (ك)	أَلْآنَ	Yūsuf/87	يايس	ييأس
Al-Baqarah/87	عيسى ابن مريم	عيسى بن مريم	Yūsuf/101	ولى ى	ولِيِّي
Al-Baqarah/90	بئس ما (ك)	بِئْسَما	Yūsuf/110	استيس	استيأس
Al-Baqarah/164	اليل(ك)	اللَّيْلِ	al-Raʿd/39	يمحوا	يمحو
Al-Baqarah/226	فاءُو	فاؤا	Ibrāhīm/9	نبؤا	نبأ
Al-Baqarah/240	فى ما(ك)	فيما	Ibrāhīm/21	الصعفؤا	الصعفاء
Al-Baqarah/275	الربوا (ك)	الربا	Al-Ḥijr/95	المستهزءين	المستهزئين
Al-Baqarah/282	تسئموا	تسأموا	al-Naḥl/43	فسلوا	فسألوا
Āl-ʿImrān/35	امرأت (ك)	امرأة	al-Naḥl/48	يتفيؤا	يتفيأ
Āl-ʿImrān/75	الامين	الاميين	al-Naḥl/86	رءا (ك)	رآى
Āl-ʿImrān/79	ربّنين	ربّانيّين	al-Naḥl/90	وايتاءى	وايتاء
Āl-ʿImrān/144	افاين (ك)	أفإن	Al-Isrā'/11	يدع	يدعو
Āl-ʿImrān/153	تلون	تلوون	Al-Kahf/23	لشاىء	لشيء
al-Nisā'/16	الذان	اللذان	Al-Kahf/38	لكنا	لكن
al-Nisā'/23	التى (ك)	اللاتى	Al-Kahf/48	ألن	أن لن
al-Nisā'/25	فمن ما (ك)	فممّا	Al-Kahf/63	ارءيت	أرأيت
al-Nisā'/78	فمال هؤلاءِ (ك)	فما لهٰؤلاء	Al-Kahf/77	لتخذت	لاتّخذت
Al-Mā'idah/18	ابنؤا	ابناء	Al-Kahf/77	الداع	الداعى
Al-Mā'idah/29	جزؤا (ك)	جزاء	Al-Kahf/110	يرحوا (ك)	يرجو
Al-Mā'idah/31	سوءة	سوأة	Maryam/28	يأخت	يا أخت
Al-Anʿām/5	انبؤا (ك)	انباء	Maryam/44	يأبت	ياأبت
Al-Anʿām/34	نباءى	نبأ	Maryam/46	يأبرهيم	يا أبراهيم
Al-Anʿām/52	بالغدوة	بالغداة	Ṭā-Hā/18	اتوكؤا	اتوكأ

Al-Anʿām/94	شركوا (ك)	شركاء	Ṭā-Hā/94	ينؤم	يا ابن امّ
Al-Anʿām/115	كلمت (ك)	كلمة	Ṭā-Hā/119	لاتظمؤا	لاتظمأ
Al-Anʿām/144	اما (ك)	ام ما	Ṭā-Hā/121	سوءتهما	سوءاتهما
Al-Aʿrāf/6	فلنسلن	فلنسألن	Ṭā-Hā/130	ءاناءى	آناء
Al-Aʿrāf/20	ماورى	ماووري	Al-Anbiyā'/37	سأوريكم (ك)	سأريكم
Al-Aʿrāf/56	رحمت (ك)	رحمة	Al-Mu'minūn/24	الملوا (ك)	الملأ
Al-Aʿrāf/69	بصطة	بسطة	Al-Mu'minūn/44	كل ما	كلما
Al-Aʿrāf/105	ان لا	الاّ	al-Nūr/8	ويدرؤا	ويدرأ
Al-Aʿrāf/127	نستحى ى	نستحيي	al-Nūr/13	جاءو	جاؤا
al-Anfāl/38	سنّت	سنّة	al-Nūr/43	عن من	عمّن
al-Tawbah/47	ولااوضعو	ولاوضعوا	Al-Furqān/21	وعتو	وعتوا
Yūnus/15	تلقاءى	تلقاء	Al-Furqān/38	وثمودا (ك)	وثمود
Yūnus/34	يبدؤا	يبدأ	Al-Furqān/49	لنحى	لنحيي
Yūnus/35	أمّن	ام من	al-Shuʿarā'/92	اين ما	اينما
Hūd/86	بقيّت	بقيّة	al-Shuʿarā'/94	الغاون (ك)	الغاوون
Hūd/87	مانشؤا	ما نشاء	al-Naml/21	لاذبحنه	لأذبحنه
Hūd/97	وملاءيه	وملأه	al-Naml/64	يبدؤا (ك)	يبدأ
al-Naml/92	اتلوا	اتلو	al-Shuʿarā'/51	وراءى	وراء
Al-Qaṣaṣ/3	نتلوا	نتلو	al-Dukhān/43	شجرت	شجرة
Al-Qaṣaṣ/4	يستحى ى (ك)	يستحيي	al-Dhāriyāt/13	يوم هم	يومهم
Al-Qaṣaṣ/9	قرّت	قرّة	al-Dhāriyāt/47	بايید	بأيد
al-Rūm/13	شفعؤا	شفعاء	Al-Qamar/6	يدع	يدعو
al-Rūm/16	لقاءى	لقاء	Al-Mujādilah/9	معصيت	معصية
al-Rūm/24	فيحى ى	فيحيي	Al-Mumtaḥanah/4	برءؤا	برءاء
al-Rūm/30	فطرت	فطرة	al-Taḥrīm/11	امرأت	امرأة
al-Rūm/39	ليربوا (ك)	ليربو	al-Taḥrīm/12	بكلمت	بكلمات
Al-Aḥzāb/37	لكى لا	لكيلا	Al-Qalam/6	بايكم	بأيّكم
Saba'/5	سعو	سعوا	Al-Takwīr/8	الموءدة	الموؤدة
Ghāfir/15	التلاق	التلاقى	Al-Inshiqāq/11	يدعوا	يدعو

Ghāfir/32	التناد	التنادی	Al-Ghāshiyah/22	بمصیطر	بمسیطر
Fuṣṣilat/29	الذّین	اللذّین	Al-Fajr/4	یسر	یسری
al-Shūrā/24	ویمح	ویمحو	Al-Fajr/23	وجایء	وجیء
al-Shūrā/30	ویعفوا (ك)	ویعفو	Quraysh/2	ای لفهم	ایلافهم
al-Shūrā/32	الجوار	الجواری			

Qur'ān at the Zenith of its Perfection and Beauty

In the early part of its history, the Holy Qur'ān experienced an evolutionary process in which its inscription and textual beauty underwent continuous development. Especially notable in this process are the relentless labors of many a great calligrapher.

The first such individual was Khālid ibn Abi'l-Hayāj, a companion of Amīr al-Mu'minīn Imam ʿAlī (ʿa), who passed away somewhere around the year 100 A.H. He was famous for his calligraphy and beautiful script. Therefore Saʿd, the freed slave and chamberlain of al-Walīd ibn ʿAbd al-Malik (86-96 A.H.), recruited him into the service of the court to inscribe codices, poetry and correspondences. He is the person responsible for the golden inscription of Sūrah al-Shams on the adytum of the Prophet's Mosque in al-Madīnah, after it underwent renovation and expansion at the hands of ʿUmar ibn ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz. This renovation of the Prophet's Mosque reached its completion in the year 90 A.H.[1]

ʿUmar ibn ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz also commissioned the inscription of a Qur'ānic codex using the same script; a task which Khālid accomplished with sublime splendor. The caliph was well pleased upon witnessing this codex. However, when Khālid demanded a large sum of money in lieu of the said work, ʿUmar turned him down and returned the masterpiece back to him.

Muḥammad ibn Isḥāq (popularly known as Ibn al-Nadīm) says, "I have seen a codex inscribed by Khālid ibn Abil-Hayāj from amongst the companions of ʿAlī (ʿa). This codex existed within the collection of historic texts owned by Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥusayn (popularly known as Ibn Abī-Baʿrah). After his death, the said collection was transferred to ʿAbdullāh ibn Hāni'."[2]

Calligraphers, until the end of the third century of Hegira, used to inscribe codices in the Kufic script. However, from then onwards, especially in the

1. ***Tārīkh al-Yaʿqūbī***, vol. 3, pg. 30 &36.
2. ***Al-Fahrist***; Part 1 from Essay 1, pg. 9. Part 1 from Essay 2, pg. 46.

early part of the fourth century, the much more exquisite Naskh font came to replace the Kufic as the calligrapher's first choice. The very first codex inscribed in Naskh was the handiwork of the renowned calligrapher Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī ibn al-Ḥusayn ibn Muqlah (272-328 A.H.). It has been said that he was the first individual to write in the Naskh and Thuluth styles. Being an expert mathematician, he used his knowledge to create a refined geometrical script, along with rules that governed its usage, thereby transforming Arabic text forever. Such a task was, and remains, unprecedented in Islamic history. Therefore, he is undoubtedly the greatest of all Muslim calligraphers. Some historical pieces of calligraphy, such as the codex preserved at the museum in Herat, Afghanistan, are attributed to him. It has also been reported that he wrote the Holy Qur'ān twice with his own hands.[1]

The Naskh script reached the zenith of its development in the seventh century of Hegira through the toils of Yāqūt ibn ʿAbdullāh al-Mawṣilī (deceased 689 A.H.). He inscribed seven codices using his beautiful calligraphic style. These codices were written in numerous varying scripts, and had become referral sources for many other calligraphers.[2] All codices, until the eleventh century, were written using Yāqūt's textual style. In the beginnings of the twelfth century, the Ottoman Turks, having conquered Egypt under the leadership of Sultan Salīm, started paying special attention to Arab-Islamic scripts. They incorporated the services of Persian calligraphers to further cultivate the development of these inscription styles. Sultan Salīm had gathered all the calligraphers, painters and artists of the Muslim world within his imperial capital. It was from this center that many new scripts and styles came into being; scripts such as al-Ruqʿah, al-Dīwānī, al-Ṭughrā'ī and al-Isṭanbūlī, all of which continue to grace artistic works to this very day.

Some of the exceptionally famous Ottoman calligraphers were Ḥāfiẓ ʿUthmān (deceased 1110 A.H.), Sayyid ʿAbdullāh Afandī (deceased 1144 A.H.), Ustad Rāsim (deceased 1169 A.H.) and Abū-Bakr Mumtāz-Beg Muṣṭafā Afandī. Abū-Bakr Mumtāz-Beg was the creator of the al-Ruqʿah style, which is the easiest and simplest of all Arabic scripts. It was he, who coined the rules governing the usage of this script and, subsequently, utilized it in his various works. He came up with this style in the year 1280 A.H. during the reign of Sultan ʿAbd al–Majīd Khān.

In a journey similar to that of its hand written cousin, the printed codex, too, passed through various evolutionary stages in the course of its development.

1. ***Al-Khaṭṭ al-ʿArabī al-Islāmī***, pg. 155.
2. ***Al-Khaṭṭ al-ʿArabī al-Islāmī***, pg. 171.

The first instance of a codex being printed occurred in 950 A.H. (1543 C.E.) in the city of Venice. However, Church authorities ordered its elimination almost immediately after it had been prepared. The second such instance occurred in 1104 A.H. (1692 C.E.) when Hincklemann printed a copy in his press in Hamburg. Subsequently, a third instance came about in 1108 A.H. (1696 C.E.) when Marracci printed a copy in Padua.

In the year 1200 A.H. (1785 C.E.) Mullā ʿUthmān printed a copy in the city of St. Petersburg, Russia. This was the very first codex printed under Muslim supervision. A similar codex was also printed in the city of Kazan.

Another copy was printed by Flugel, in Leipzig, in the year 1252 A.H. (1836 C.E.). This print of the Holy Qur'ān, due to its simplified spelling system, was welcomed warmly in European circles. However, like most copies of the Holy Qur'ān printed in Europe, it had little or no appeal for readers in the Islamic world.

The first Islamic state to successfully print a Qur'ānic codex was Iran. The government in question used lithographic inscription in order to prepare two beautiful codices of the Holy Qur'ān. These manuscripts were characterized by their large volume. The codices in question included an inline translation and detailed indexes. One of these codices was printed in Tehran in the year 1243 A.H. (1827 C.E.), whereas the other was printed in Tabriz in the year 1248 A.H. (1832 C.E.). During the same period, we also find the Holy Qur'ān being printed and distributed in India.

In 1294 A.H. (1877 C.E.) the Ottoman Turkish state began printing various codices of the Holy Qur'ān, marked by their extraordinary beauty and meticulous workmanship.

In 1323 A.H. (1905 C.E.), a copy of the Holy Qur'ān was printed by Tsarist Russia incorporating the Kufic script. Some people mistakenly presumed it to be a survived copy of the ʿUthmānic codex. This codex was voluminous and devoid of dots as well as other diacritic markings. A few of its initial pages had gone missing and, similarly, its end was also incomplete. This copy began from the eighth verse of Sūrah al-Baqarah, which is as follows:

﴿ وَمِنَ ٱلنَّاسِ مَن يَقُولُ ءَامَنَّا بِٱللَّهِ وَبِٱلۡيَوۡمِ ٱلۡأٓخِرِ وَمَا هُم بِمُؤۡمِنِينَ ﴾

"And there are some people who say: We believe in Allah and the last day; and they are not at all believers."[1]

Likewise, it ended with verse 4 of Sūrah al-Zukhruf.

1. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Baqarah (2:8).

﴿ وَإِنَّهُۥ فِيٓ أُمِّ ٱلْكِتَٰبِ لَدَيْنَا لَعَلِيٌّ حَكِيمٌ ﴾

"And surely it is in the original of the Book with Us, truly elevated, full of wisdom."[1]

This codex was found in Samarqand and later preserved in the Museum at St. Petersburg. The Archeological Institute in Tashkent prepared fifty identical photographic copies of this codex and gifted them to various universities in the Islamic world. One such copy rests in the Tehran University Library (reference no. DSS 14403).

Egypt succeeded in printing a copy of the Holy Qur'ān, under the auspices of Al-Azhar University scholars, in the year 1342 A.H. (1923 C.E.). This copy was characterized by its exquisite style and gained universal appeal throughout Muslim countries. Many later prints of the Holy Qur'ān were designed in accordance with this particular codex.

In 1370 A.H. (1950 C.E.), Iraq, too, joined the club of Qur'ān printing states with its publication of a beautiful Qur'ānic codex. Soon afterwards, this practice became common in almost all Muslim countries and, thus, the printing of fine Qur'ānic codices continues throughout the Islamic world to this day.

In later years, Qur'ānic codices printed according to the ʿUthmān Ṭāhā contemporary script became exceedingly popular amongst Muslims throughout the world. The publication of such specimens became common in Syria, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Lebanon and other countries. This script is distinguished by its uniform distribution of verses for every page, and its systemized division of the Qur'ān into three principle and thirty secondary portions.[2]

1. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Zukhruf (43:4).
2. For more details about the ʿUthmān Ṭāhā script, please refer to: Khurramshahī, Bahā' al-Dīn, ***Qur'ān Pijuhish***, pg. 657.

CHAPTER FOUR:
THE RECITERS AND THE SEVEN PRINCIPLE RECITATIONS

Recitation of the Holy Qur'ān is one of the most important facets of Qur'ānic science. It is of such vital significance that we find groups of people, from the very beginning of Islamic history, continuously engaged in activities revolving around this very pivot. Learning to recite the Qur'ān, and teaching it to others, has remained, without exception, a most crucial societal function within the Muslim community. Senior companions like ʿAbdullāh ibn Masʿūd, Ubayy ibn Kaʿb, Abū'l-Dardā' and Zayd ibn Thābit, along with level two personalities such as ʿAbdullāh Ibn ʿAbbās, Abū'l-Aswad al-Du'alī, ʿAlqamah ibn Qays, ʿAbdullāh ibn al-Sā'ib, Aswad ibn Yazīd, Abū-ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn Salamah and Masrūq ibn al-Ajdaʿ, are all seen vehemently engrossed in different levels of this critical responsibility. Other renowned individuals, who form levels three to eight of this classification, were eagerly engaged within this field at different phases in history. From level eight onwards, the actual codification of Qur'ānic recitations began to take shape, until finally, we reach a point where seven principal recitational styles were formally established.

The unbroken chain of renowned reciters and popular recitation styles continued century after century. However, in the beginning of the 4th century of Hegira, Abū-Bakr ibn Mujāhid (245-324 A.H.) also known as Shaykh Qurrā' Baghdād, formalized the Qur'ān's recitation into seven distinct recitational styles belonging to seven renowned reciters. Later on, others added an additional seven recitational styles to this list, thereby increasing the total to fourteen. These fourteen styles gained universal endorsement amongst the Muslims. Each of these styles can be traced back to it source through two separate chains of narration. Therefore, if viewed in terms of the number of narrations, the total number of standard recitational styles rises to twenty-eight.

There exists a debate about the probative validity of each of these recitational styles. The main issue revolves around whether or not there exists enough evidence to attribute all these recitational methods to the Holy Prophet (ṣ) himself. In our opinion, the superfluity of arguments, both in favor and against the said proposition, is in itself proof of their relative weakness. According to the view of many researchers, only one style was

narrated down from the Holy Prophet (ṣ) himself, and that style is the one we find predominantly popular amongst the overwhelming majority of Muslims. As a result, all styles that correspond to the one in question are deemed acceptable, whereas all techniques contrary to this standard are to be rejected automatically.[1]

The Definition of "Recitation"

"Recitation," in our case, signifies the reading of the Holy Qur'ān. Technically called *tilāwah* or ritual recital, it has to itself some special characteristics. In other words, whenever the exact text of the Holy Qur'ān is read out according to the standards set by one of the famous reciters, and in adherence to the rules that apply to such a reading, the act of "recitation" comes into being. There is no doubt that the Qur'ān is comprised of one unchangeable text, and that this text is indeed a singular unalterable reality. The differences seen in the recitational styles are not indicative of differences in the Qur'ān itself. In fact, these visible differences are the result of each respective reciter's personal efforts in trying to discover that singular reality.

Imam al-Ṣādiq (ʿa) says,

> "The Qur'ān is one, and has been revealed by the One. However, disagreements (within its recitation) have come about because of its narrators."[2]

The famous reciters of the Holy Qur'ān have all attempted to narrate that which was revealed to the Holy Prophet (ṣ). However, this process of narration has led them to differ with one another. The causes that underline the formation of these disagreements are as follows:

1. The existence of differences within the early codices, regardless of whether they existed before or after the codical unification conducted by ʿUthmān.

2. The absence of dots and diacritic markings in the said codices.

3. The incipient nature of Arabic script during that era.

Factors Responsible for Recitational Differences

The factors responsible for the emergence of differences between the various recitational styles can be traced back to a time immediately following the death of the Blessed Messenger of God (ṣ). In this period, the companions disagreed upon numerous matters related to the collection, compilation and

1. ***Al-Tamhīd***, vol. 2, pg. 42 onwards, &, pg. 218-226.
2. ***Uṣūl Al-Kāfī***, vol. 2, pg. 630, Ḥadīth. 12.

inscription of the Holy Qur'ān, and this resulted in the creation of disagreements in between the reciters. Each group held its own recitational interpretation to be correct. As time passed, this staunch difference of opinion escalated, finally leading to the creation of serious conflicts between them.

These very conflicts motivated the caliph ʿUthmān to take steps towards the unification of the Qur'ānic codex. Once unified, several facsimiles were produced of this official codex and sent to the various important provincial centers of the Islamic state. However, even after this unification had taken place, complete homogeneity was not achieved between the copies of this official codex. This lack of uniformity between the official facsimiles resulted in the formation of new recitational differences. We shall point towards some of these disagreements below:

CHAPTER	VERSE	THE CODICES OF MEDINA AND SYRIA	THE CODICES OF KUFA AND BASRA (IN ACCORDANCE TO PRESENT DAY CODICES)
Al-Baqarah	116	قالوا اتخذ الله ولداً...	و قالوا اتخذ الله ولداً...
Al-Baqarah	132	و أوصى بها ابراهيم...	و وصّى بها ابراهيم...
Al-Mā'idah	54	من يرتدد منكم عن دينه...	من يرتدّ منكم عن دينه...
Al-Aʿrāf	141	و اذ أنجا كم من آل فرعون...	و اذ أنجينا كم من ال فرعون...
Al-Isrā'	93	قال سبحان ربّی...	قل سبحان ربّی...

It seems that all the efforts, which were put into the process of codical unification, failed to yield the intended results, as the differences between the recitations grew steadily. Before the unification, disagreements originated from the various recitations of the companions, and after the production of this official codex, the said manuscript itself became of source of recitational contention. ʿUthmān, himself, was also aware of this problem and had witnessed it in the codex handed over to him by the unification committee. He said, "I see inscription mistakes in this text," to which they responded, "Shall we not fix these errors?" ʿUthmān replied, "No, it is too late now. The Arab reader will understand and rectify these discrepancies during recitation." However, he failed to appreciate that in the future, non-Arab nations, due to their assimilation into Islam, would also need to read the Holy Qur'ān. He also failed to predict that, with the entrance of a huge number of non-Arabs into the Islamic nation, even the native Arab's

comprehension of classical Arabic would become depleted.[1]

Nevertheless, numerous factors played a role in the emergence of recitational disagreements after the process of codical unification had been completed. Herein, we shall limit ourselves to discussing only the most important of these issues:

The Incipient Nature of Arabic Script

Arabic script, in the said era, was still in a fetal stage of development. Arabs at large were unaware of the rules that govern the art of inscription, and would write words based upon their personal interpretation of how a certain pronunciation could be penned down using alphabets. Effects of this early methodology can still be sensed in some parts of contemporary Arabic. In that early system, words were inscribed in a manner that made it possible to pronounce them in several different ways. The letter *nūn* (ن), occurring at the end of a word, looked exactly like *rā'* (ر), and there existed no difference between the shapes of *yā'* (ي) and *wāw* (و). Many a times *mīm* (م), occurring in the end of a word, would be written in a manner similar to *wāw* (و), and *dāl* (د) would often be indistinguishable from the Kufic *kāf* (ك). Likewise, the letter *ʿayn* (ع), when it occurred between two other alphabets, would look exactly the same as the letter *hā'* (هـ). In other instances, alphabets belonging to one word were inscribed in a disjointed manner, separate from the word in question. Examples of this include the alphabet *yā'* (ي), which was written as a cut-off suffix in words like يستحيي, نحيي and أُحيي. In other places, *yā'* (ي) would be omitted altogether. One example of this is the word ايلافهم, inscribed in those days as الافهم, thereby rendering the reader confused about its correct pronunciation. Consequently, many reciters would end up pronouncing these words in accordance to their inscribed spellings, rather than the correct ones. One such reciter was Abū-Jaʿfar who would recite the Qur'ānic verse: لِايلافِ قريش[2] as ليلاف قريش, with *hamzah* (أ) deleted. Similarly, the same reciter would recite the verse:إِيلاَفِهِمْ رِحْلَةَ الشِّتَاءِ وَالصَّيْفِ [3] with الافهم rather than ايلافهم.[4]

Likewise, another reciter, named Ibn Filayyah, would recite the said word as إلفهم, with *yā'* (ي) left out and *lām* (ل) silent. In short, due to the unfavorable condition of the text at hand, almost every other reciter would recite this particular word in a strange and different manner.

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1. ***Al-Tamhīd***, vol. 2, pg. 4-8.
2. *"For the protection of the Quraysh"*; the Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah Quraysh (106:1).
3. *"Their protection during their trading caravans in the winter and the summer",* The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah Quraysh (106:2).
4. ***Tafsīr al-Ṭabarsī***, vol. 1, pg. 544; ***Sharḥ Mawrid al-Zamān***, pg. 143.

Other irregularities include the inscription of the *tanwīn* (nunation) (the affixal /n/ called a nunation) as *nūn* (ن), whereas in other places the same would be inscribed as *alif* (ا). Examples of this include the inscription of the word: لَنَسْفَعَنْ[1] as لَنَسْفَعاً, or the verse: وَلَيَكُونَنْ مِنَ الصَّاغِرِينَ[2] as ...لِيكوناً. Similarly, the verse: وَإِذْنْ لآتَيْنَاهُمْ[3] was written with إذاً rather than إذْنْ.[4]

The omission of *wāw* (و) and *yā'* (ي) without any apparent reason caused many problems, not only in recitation, but also in exegesis. In the verse: وصالِحُوا المؤمنين[5] *wāw* (و) was dropped from the word صالحوا and, as a result, the actual inscription read as وصالِحُ المؤمنين. Under these circumstances, it was not known whether the word in question represented a singular or a plural tense verb.[6]

alif was deleted from the verse: عادا الاولى[7] so that the remaining word looked like عاد, leaving the reader confused. This confusion occurred because there was no way to tell whether the said word was a noun or a verb.[8]

Similarly, the letter *alif* (ا) was added to جاءنا, in verse 38 of Sūrah al-Zukhruf, so that the word would be transformed into جاءانا. Herein, it would be difficult to tell whether the said word was a singular or a dual tense verb.[9] The letter *wāw* (و), if it occurred as the last alphabet within a given word, was coupled with an affixal *alif* (ا). Thus, the given word would sometimes be mistaken for a plural past tense verb. On the other hand, the mandatory *alif* (ا), that follows *wāw* (و) at the end of all plural past tense verbs, would normally be deleted. Examples of the first instance are إنّما اشكوا بَثّي, فلا يربوا, نبلوا اخباركم and ما تتلوا الشياطين. Similarly, examples of the second phenomenon are فاؤو, جاؤو, تبؤو الدار, سعو and عتو.

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1. *"Nay! If he desist not, We would certainly smite his forehead,",* The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah al-ʿAlaq (96:15).
2. *"She said: This is he with respect to whom you blamed me, and certainly I sought his yielding himself (to me), but he abstained, and if he does not do what I bid him, he shall certainly be imprisoned, and he shall certainly be of those who are in a state of ignominy."* The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah Yūsuf (12:32)
3. *"And then We would certainly have given them from Ourselves a great reward."* The Holy Qur'ān, al-Nisā', (4:67).
4. ***Sharḥ Mawrid al-Zamān***, pg. 186.
5. *"If you both turn to Allah, then indeed your hearts are already inclined (to this); and if you back up each other against him, then surely Allah it is Who is his Guardian, and Jibreel and -the believers that do good, and the angels after that are the aiders."* The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Taḥrīm (66:4).
6. ***Tafsīr al-Ṭabarsī***, vol. 10, pg. 316. ***Sharḥ Mawrid al-Zamān***, pg. 47.
7. *"And that He did destroy the Ad of old",* The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Najm (53:50).
8. ***Sharḥ Mawrid al-Zamān***, pg. 125.
9. ***Sharḥ Mawrid al-Zamān***, pg. 128.

In summary, the incongruities that existed in early codices, some surviving to this very day, have been responsible for many an exasperating difficulty. Chief amongst these concerns are the deeply entrenched recitational disputes we see between various renowned reciters. Indeed, it was because of these very discrepancies that some classical scholars ended up losing all faith in the Qur'ān's script. As a result, they would deem all Qur'ānic ambiguities to be careless mistakes made by early scribes. It has been narrated from Ibn ʿAbbās that he recited this verse of the Holy Qur'ān:

﴿وَقَضَىٰ رَبُّكَ أَلَّا تَعْبُدُوٓاْ إِلَّآ إِيَّاهُ وَبِٱلْوَٰلِدَيْنِ إِحْسَٰنًا ۚ إِمَّا يَبْلُغَنَّ عِندَكَ ٱلْكِبَرَ أَحَدُهُمَآ أَوْ كِلَاهُمَا فَلَا تَقُل لَّهُمَآ أُفٍّ وَلَا تَنْهَرْهُمَا وَقُل لَّهُمَا قَوْلًا كَرِيمًا﴾

"And your Lord has commanded that you shall not serve (any) but Him, and goodness to your parents. If either or both of them reach old age with you, say not to them (so much as) "Ugh" nor chide them, and speak to them a generous word." [1]

However, instead of reciting the word وقضى, he said ووصّى. Having done this, he remarked, "This is the correct recitation of the said verse. Nevertheless, since *wāw* (و) got attached to *ṣād* (ص) during inscription, common people were mistakenly led into reading the given word as قضى." The absence of dots in the early codices does indeed allow for such a possibility.

Ibn Ashtah says, "The scribes used too much ink when they wrote the word ووصّى and, as a result, *wāw* (و) got attached to *ṣād* (ص)"[2]. Likewise, Ibn ʿAbbās is narrated to have recited verse 31 of Sūrah al-Raʿd in a manner different from that which exists in the Qur'ānic codex. In this verse, he has read the word ييأس as يتبيّن. With regard to this case he says, "In the codex we find the phrase افلم ييأس, whereas I believe that the scribe in question has mistakenly misspelled this given word"[3]. It is important to note that in the early script *alif* (ا) occurring in the middle of a word was often represented using just an additional curve. Thus, with the absence of dots, the only visible difference between ييئس and يتبيّن was one tiny little curve.

1. The Absence of Dots

Another crucial factor contributing to recitational disagreements was the confusion created by the absence of consonant pointing diacritics or dots.

1. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Isrā' (17:23).
2. ***Al-Itqān***, vol. 1, pg. 180; ***Al-Durr al-Manthūr***, vol. 4, pg. 170.
3. ***Fatḥ al-Bārī***, vol. 8, pg. 282-283. Refer to: ***Jāmiʿ Al-BayānTafsīr al-Ṭabarī***, vol. 13, pg. 104; ***al-Itqān***, vol. 1, pg. 185.

There was no way to differentiate between *muʿjamah* alphabets (alphabets with dots) and *muhmalah* alphabets (alphabets without dots) in the early Arabic script. Therefore, when inscribing *shīn* (ش) or *sīn* (س), *bāʹ* (ب) or *tāʹ* (ت) or *thāʹ* (ث), *jīm* (ج) or *ḥāʹ* (ح) or *khāʹ* (خ), *ṣād* (ص) or *ḍād* (ض), *ṭāʹ* (ط) or *ẓāʹ* (ظ), *ʿayn* (ع) or *ghayn* (غ), *fāʹ* (ف) or *qāf* (ق), *nūn* (ن) or *yāʹ* (ي), it was basically impossible to tell one from the other. The only way for a reader to discern between alphabets, used in a given statement, was to pay meticulous attention to the apparent meaning and structure of that sentence.

From this perspective, we find people like al-Kisāʾī reciting verse 6 of Sūrah al-Ḥujurāt as: ان جاءكم فاسق بنبإ فتثبّتوا, whereas others have adhered to the following recitation[1]:

﴿ يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوٓاْ إِن جَآءَكُمۡ فَاسِقُۢ بِنَبَإٖ فَتَبَيَّنُوٓاْ أَن تُصِيبُواْ قَوۡمَۢا بِجَهَٰلَةٖ فَتُصۡبِحُواْ عَلَىٰ مَا فَعَلۡتُمۡ نَٰدِمِينَ ﴾

"O you who believe! if an evil-doer comes to you with a report, look carefully into it, lest you harm a people in ignorance, then be sorry for what you have done." [2]

Similarly, Ibn ʿĀmir and the Kufi reciters have read verse 259 of Sūrah al-Baqarah using the word نُنشِزُها, whereas others have used the word نُنشِرُها.[3]

Likewise, Ibn ʿĀmir and Ḥafṣ have recited verse 271 of Sūrah al-Baqarah using the phrase ويُكفّر عنكم, while others had believed it to be نُكفّر[4]

Ibn Samīq recites verse 92 of Sūrah Yūnus as فاليوم ننحّيك ببدنك, while others have understood it to be ننجّيك instead.[5]

In the same way, Kufi reciters, with the exception of Ḥafṣ, have read verse 58 of Sūrah al-ʿAnkabūt as لنثوينّهم من الجنة غُرَفا, while other have chosen to recite it as لنبوئنّهم.[6]

2. The Absence of Diacritic Markings

One more key feature of the early codices was that they were devoid of any supplementary diacritic markings. The words inscribed in these codices were empty of inflection, as well as vowel markings. This made it very difficult for a non-Arab reader to deduce the correct pronunciation and grammatical case of any given word. In fact, this process was sometimes complicated and

1. Abū-Ḥafṣ al-Anṣārī, ***al-Muqarrar***, pg. 141.
2. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Ḥujurāt (49:6).
3. ***Al-Kashf ʿan Wujūh al-Qirāʾāt***, vol. 1, pg. 310.
4. Ibid, vol. 1, pg. 316.
5. ***Tafsīr al-Ṭabarsī***, vol. 5, pg. 130.
6. ***Tafsīr al-Ṭabarsī***, vol. 8, pg. 290.

tedious for native Arabs as well. As an example, the word أعلم could be pronounced and understood in several different ways. If taken to be a verb, it could be recited in the past, present or imperative tenses. At the same time it could also be read as a comparative noun.

The *hamzah* and *kasrah*, when reciting verse 259 of Sūrah al-Baqarah, have chosen to pronounce this word in the imperative tense, whereas other reciters have deemed it to be a present tense verb.[1]

Reciters have differed in their recitational interpretations when dealing with other words as well. In verse 119 of Sūrah al-Baqarah, we find Nāfiʿ pronouncing the word لا تسأل in the negative imperative tense, while others have chosen to recite it in the present passive tense.[2] In another place, we see al-Kisā'ī and Ḥamzah reciting verse 158 of the same Sūrah using the word تطوّع, in the present tense, with *yā'* (ي) instead of *tā'* (ت), and a germinated *ṭā'* (ط). Others have recited the same word in the past tense, with *tā'* (ت) instead of *yā'* (ي), and single *ṭā'* (ط) in place of a germinated one.[3]

Ibn Abī-Hāshim explains, "The reason behind the recitational differences found in the seven principle styles is that the codices dispatched to various provincial capitals, and other important urban centers, were devoid of any distinct diacritic markings. The people, therefore, were free to interpret the text as they saw fit. This led to the creation of disagreements between the reciters of various cities."[4]

The great teacher, Ayatollah al-Khū'ī, says, "The recitational differences do not seem attributable to differences in traditions narrated from the Holy Prophet (ṣ), rather they are the result of interpretations carried out by individual reciters themselves. Discourse, carried out by senior scholars with reference to this issue, is also indicative of this very fact. In fact, the absence of dots and supplementary diacritic markings (vowel marks and case diacritics) in the early codices can be seen as evidence in favor of this particular view."[5]

3. The Absence of alif (ا)

Another troublesome aspect within early Arabic script, which played a role in the emergence of recitational disputes, was the absence of *alif* (ا). Arabic script was largely derived from the Syriac textual style. In Syriac, *alif* (ا), occurring in the middle of a word, would normally be left unwritten. Since

1. ***Al-Kashf ʿan Wujūh al-Qirā'āt***, vol. 1, pg. 312.
2. Ibid, vol. 1, pg. 262.
3. Ibid, vol. 1, pg. 268.
4. ***Al-Tibyān***, pg. 86.
5. ***Al-Bayān***, pg. 181.

early Qur'ānic codices were inscribed in the Kufic font, words such as "سماوات" were inscribed without *alif*, so that they would look like "سموت". Later on, small superscripted *alif* were incorporated to indicate the correct pronunciation of such words.

This omission of the intermediary *alif* was the cause of many recitational conflicts. Examples include the following cases:

Abū-Jaʿfar, Nāfiʿ and Ibn Kathīr have recited the word "ما يخدعون", which occurs in verse 9 of Sūrah al-Baqarah, as "ما يخادعون". They have done so because they believe this word to be a repetition of an earlier word, which occurs in the beginning of the same verse, wherein *alif* (ا) has been omitted.[1] However, the apparent meaning of the verse in question dictates that the said word be pronounced without an additional *alif* (ا). Similarly, in verse 95 of Sūrah al-Anbiyā', reciters such as Ḥamzah, al-Kisā'ī and Shuʿbah have chosen to pronounce the word "حرام" without *alif* (ا) that occurs between the alphabets *rā'* (ر) and *mīm* (م).[2]

Abū-Jaʿfar and al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī reciters recited verse 51 of Sūrah al-Baqarah, a verse that also occurs in Sūrah al-Aʿrāf and Sūrah Ṭā-Hā, while dropping the alif found in the word "واعدنا".

Likewise, we find Nāfiʿ reciting verse 10 of Sūrah Yūsuf while adding *alif* to the word "غيابت" and, thus, pronouncing it as "غيابات", rendering the said word plural. This word had been inscribed in the early codices as "غيبت" and this made it possible for it to be interpreted in different ways. Some would pronounce it in the singular, while others would prefer the plural tense, both groups expressing separate arguments in favor of their interpretations.[3]

In summary, issues such as these (of which we have mentioned only a few) are the cause behind the emergence of recitational altercations in between the Qur'ānic reciters. These ambiguities helped create an environment wherein every reciter acted in accordance with his own personal interpretation of the Qur'ānic text. As a result, each interpretation was, subsequently, supported by a body of arguments and circumstantial proofs.

The Seven Principle Reciters and Their Respective Narrators

As has already been discussed, recitational differences existed in between the various reciters of the Holy Qur'ān, and, as time went on, the number of such reciters also grew steadily. Finally Ibn Mujāhid chose from amongst all the known Qur'ānic reciters, seven famous individuals whose styles were

1. ***Al-Kashf ʿan Wujūh al-Qirā'āt***, vol. 1, pg. 224.
2. ***Sharḥ Mawrid al-Zamān***, pg. 126.
3. ***Al-Kashf ʿan Wujūh al-Qirā'āt***, vol. 2, pg. 5.

corroborated by two separate chains of narration each. These seven reciters were as follows:

1. Ibn ʿĀmir: ʿAbdullāh ibn ʿĀmir al-Yaḥṣabī (deceased 118 A.H.) was a Syrian reciter of the Holy Qur'ān. The two narrators who serve to substantiate his style's validity are Hāshim ibn ʿAmmār (153-245 A.H.) and Ibn Dhakwān (173-242 A.H.). Neither of the two was contemporary to Ibn ʿĀmir.

2. Ibn Kathīr: ʿAbdullāh ibn Kathīr al-Dārimī (deceased 120 A.H.) was a Makkan reciter of the Holy Qur'ān. His two narrators are al-Bazzī (170-250 A.H.) and Qunbul (195-291 A.H.). Neither of the two was contemporary to Ibn Kathīr.

3. *ʿĀṣim*: ʿĀṣim ibn Abi'l-Nujūd al-Asadī (deceased 128 A.H.) was a Kufī reciter of the Holy Qur'ān. One of his two narrators is his adopted son Ḥafṣ ibn Sulaymān (90-180 A.H.) and the other is Shuʿbah Abū-Bakr ibn ʿAyyāsh (95-193 A.H.). Ḥafṣ had far better knowledge of the recitational style of ʿĀṣim than anyone else, and it was he who helped popularize this particular recitation. Today, the recitation of ʿĀṣim, as narrated by Ḥafṣ, is the recitation adhered to by Muslims in most Islamic countries.

4. Abū-ʿAmr: Abū-ʿAmr ibn al-ʿAlā al-Māzinī (deceased 154 A.H.) was a Qur'ānic reciter from al-Baṣrah. His two narrators are Ḥafṣ ibn ʿUmar (deceased 246 A.H.) and Ṣāliḥ ibn Ziyād (deceased 261 A.H.). They were not contemporary to Abū-ʿAmr, and had learnt his style from al-Yazīdī.

5. Ḥamzah: Ḥamzah ibn Ḥabīb al-Zayyāt (deceased 156 A.H.) was a Qur'ānic reciter in al-Kūfah. His two narrators are Khalaf ibn Hāshim (150-229 A.H.) and Khallād ibn Khālid (deceased 220 A.H.). They learnt Ḥamzah's recitational style from another teacher.

6. Nāfiʿ: Nāfiʿ ibn ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Laythī (deceased 169 A.H.) was a Madīnite reciter of the Holy Qur'ān. One of his two narrators is his adopted son ʿĪsā ibn Minā (120-220 A.H.), popularly known as Qālūn, and the other is ʿUthmān ibn Saʿīd (110-197 A.H.). This recitation is still popular in some West-Arabian countries.

7. Al-Kisā'ī: ʿAlī ibn Ḥamzah (deceased 189 A.H.) was a Qur'ānic reciter in al-Kūfah. His two narrators are al-Layth ibn Khālid (deceased 240 A.H.) and Ḥafṣ ibn ʿUmar (deceased 246 A.H.). The latter was also a narrator for Abū-ʿAmr.

The Ten Reciters

Apart from these seven individuals, later day scholars added another three reciters to the said list. These three were:

Khalaf: Khalaf ibn Hāshim (deceased 229 A.H.) was reciter of the Holy Qur'ān from Baghdad. His two narrators are Abū-Yaʿqūb (deceased 286 A.H.) and Abū'l-Ḥasan (deceased 292 A.H.). He was also one of the two narrators for Ḥamzah's recitational style.

Yaʿqūb: Yaʿqūb al-Khaḍramī (deceased 130 A.H.) was a Qur'ānic reciter in al-Baṣrah. His two narrators are Ruways (deceased 238 A.H.) and Rawḥ (deceased 235 A.H.).

Abū-Jaʿfar: Abū-Jaʿfar al-Makhzūmī (deceased 130 A.H.) was a Madīnite reciter of the Holy Qur'ān. His two narrators are Ibn Wardān (deceased 160 A.H.) and Ibn Ḥammāz (deceased 170 A.H.).

The Fourteen Reciters

Four other reciters, who adhered to niche and uncommon styles, were also added to the above mentioned list. These four individuals were as follows:

Al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī: Al-Ḥasan ibn Yasār (deceased 110 A.H.) was a Qur'ānic reciter from al-Baṣrah. His two narrators are Shujāʿ al-Balkhī (120-190 A.H.) and Dhurayḥ (deceased 246 A.H.). Neither was contemporary to al-Ḥasan, and both had learnt his recitational style from another teacher.

Ibn Muḥaysin: Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Raḥmān (deceased 123 A.H.) was a Makkan reciter of the Holy Qur'ān. His two narrators are al-Bazzī (170-250 A.H.) and Ibn Shānūz (deceased 328 A.H.). Neither of the two narrators were contemporary to the said reciter.

Al-Yazīdī: Yaḥyā ibn Mubārak (deceased 202 A.H.) was a Qur'ān reciter from al-Baṣrah. His narrators are Sulaymān ibn al-Ḥakam (deceased 235 A.H.) and Aḥmad ibn Faraj (deceased 303 A.H.). Both narrations are indirect in nature.

Al-Aʿmash: Sulaymān ibn Mahrān al-Asadī (deceased 148 A.H.) was a Kufi reciter of the Holy Qur'ān. His narrators are al-Shanbudhī (300-388 A.H.) and al-Muṭawwaʿī (deceased 371 A.H.). Both narrations are such that there exist several intermediaries between the said narrators and al-Aʿmash.

These fourteen recitational styles, all of which have two narrators each, form a total of twenty eight separate instances. Knowledge of these instances is important from the perspective of Qur'ānic studies.

All of the seven principle reciters, except for Ibn ʿĀmir and Abū-ʿAmr, were ethnic Iranians. Thus, five of the seven were from Iranian origin. The genealogy of Ibn ʿĀmir is not known, whereas Abū-ʿAmr was a Tamīmī Arab from the tribe of Māzin. However, al-Qāḍī Asad al-Yazīdī says, "He (Abū-ʿAmr) hailed from the village of Kazroon near the Persian city of Shiraz."

ʿĀṣim, Abū-ʿAmr, Ḥamzah and al-Kisā'ī were all Shīʿah Muslims and their admission of this fact is recorded in history. Ibn Kathīr and Nāfiʿ, because of their Persian roots, were also probably Shīʿah. However, Ibn ʿĀmir, having been raised under the Umayyad influence, was known for his dishonesty and corrupt indulgences.[1]

The Unbroken Transmission of Narrations Pertaining to the Seven Recitations

One of the key issues pertinent to the seven principle recitational styles is whether they have unbroken transmissions of narration or not. If the existence of such unbroken chains of narration were to be established, the said recitations would achieve probative validity.

Many relevant authors, as well as some jurists, believe that all seven recitations have unbroken narrative transmissions. As a result, they see all seven styles as having met the criteria needed to attain probative validity. Thus, they proclaim that the usage of all said styles is permissible during daily ritual prayers. Nevertheless, researchers have adhered to a stance, wherein they refute the veracity and consistency of the narrative transmissions in question. They ask the question: What is meant by an "unbroken narrative transmission?" If the meaning of such a transmission be a consensus amongst the reciters, then such a consensus is devoid of any real worth. This is because the value of a transmitted narration is judged upon whether it originates from an immaculate source or not; such value is not derived from any consensus that may exist with respect to it. However, if the meaning of such an unbroken transmission is that it originates from the Holy Prophet (ṣ) himself, then no such attribution is known to be established with regard to the seven styles in question. In fact, most of the reciters lack even the most basic of accreditation. Apart from this, most of these styles were spawned by personal interpretations, and were not a result of separate narratives or prophetic traditions.

If we were to accept, for argument's sake, that there existed an unbroken narrative transmission from the Holy Prophet (ṣ) till the seven principle reciters, such an unbroken chain would still be considered worthless. This is because such unbroken transmissions only yield probative validity for individuals who are themselves recipients of this transmission. Similarly, if we were to acknowledge that the said styles were indeed narrated from the Holy Prophet (ṣ) to the reciters in question, and subsequently, narrated by these reciters to the rest of the people, we would still be lacking a fundamental pre-requisite necessary for the establishment of an unbroken

1. ***Al-Tamhīd***, vol. 2, pg. 226-231.

narrative transmission. This is because an "unbroken narrative transmission" requires that there exist a consensus at every level of the transmittance in question. No such consensus exists within the transmittance of these seven recitational styles, since we observe that in at least one of the intermediary transmittal levels the number of narrators shrinks to just one individual.

If we were to assume that each one of these seven recitational styles had, for itself, an unbroken chain of narrations, stretching from the Holy Prophet (ṣ) down to the respective reciters themselves, this assumption would necessitate that the said recitation be narrated by other individuals, contemporary to the said reciter, as well. However, such a multiplicity of narrations is nowhere to be found. The only narration existing during the era in question is that of the reciter himself. In fact, if it were not for the respective reciters, the presumed "unbroken transmission of narrations" that predated them, would not have found its way to people in later days. Having understood this, we find that during the relevant time periods of the reciters in question, the consensus and multiplicity of narrations, that characterizes any unbroken narrative chain, dwindles to just one individual. This fact, itself, nullifies the foremost pre-requisite needed for the existence of an "unbroken narrative transmission."

Therefore, it is inherently and logically inconceivable that these seven principle recitations be accredited with having unbroken narrative transmissions. The very fact that a said recitational style became attributed to a certain reciter, to the extent that it even took upon itself his name, shows that the relevant reciter existed as a sole narrator of the said recitation during his own time.

The Ḥadīth of Seven Letters

One of the evidences presented in order to establish the probative validity of the seven principle recitations is a prophetic tradition named the Ḥadīth of seven letters. According to this tradition the Holy Prophet (ṣ) is narrated to have said, "The Qur'ān descended in seven letters."

The Arabic word *aḥruf*, or letters, is the plural form of *ḥarf*, or letter. Proponents of the seven recitational styles believe that the word *letters*, in this prophetic tradition, indicates recitations. However, we have proven elsewhere that the word *letters*, in this given tradition, actually points towards the different dialects existing amongst the Arabs of that time. Different Arab tribes would pray the daily prayers and recite the Holy Qur'ān using their own dialects as opposed to the superior dialect of the Quraysh tribe. Confused by this issue, some of the companions asked the Holy Prophet (ṣ) whether it was necessary for all Muslims to adhere to the

Quraysh's dialect or not. The Holy Prophet (ṣ) replied in the negative, and explained that the Holy Qur'ān had been revealed in seven different dialects. In accordance to metaphorical usage popular amongst the Arabs, the word *seven*, in the said tradition, is not indicative of a specific number, but rather it serves to signify a large unspecified quantity.

Probative Validity of the Seven Recitations

Given our discussion so far, we are faced by a few critical questions. Do the seven principal recitations have any probative validity at all? Similarly, is it permissible for a Muslim to use any of these seven recitations while performing the Islamic ritual prayers?

The response furnished by most religious jurisprudents is indicative of permissibility. The late Sayyid Muḥammad Kāẓim al-Yazdī, in his book *al-ʿUrwah al-Wuthqā*, and the late Sayyid Abū'l-Ḥasan al-Iṣfahānī, in his *Wasīlat al-Najāh*, have considered it preferable, based on dutiful caution, for a Muslim to refrain from using a recitation other than the seven principal ones. Caution aside, the actual edict of these two senior jurisprudents is that every correct recitation, be it from amongst the seven or not, automatically fulfills the legal requirements needed for performing the Islamic ritual prayers.[1]

According to Ayatollah al-Khū'ī, only those recitations which were common during the time of the immaculate Imams are to be deemed acceptable.[2] With regards to the tradition, "Recite according to that which the people recite," he believes that the Imam's directive exclusively points towards the popular recitational styles of that day. Imām Khomeini adheres to dutiful caution, and rules that one should desist from using a recitation other than the seven principal ones.[3]

Nevertheless, the popular juristic opinion, in this case, dictates that a Muslim is free to choose any one of the seven said recitational styles. This ruling creates an apparent contradiction between the tradition which says, "The Qur'ān is one, and has been revealed by the One. However, the disagreements (within its recitation) are caused by the narrators," and the other which declares, "Recite according to that which the people recite." The proponents of the said juristic view have sought to resolve this contradiction by saying that the Imams have deemed all seven recitations permissible, not because the Qur'ān actually had seven different recitations, but as *rukhṣah* or

1. ***Al-ʿUrwah al-Wuthqā***; The Etiquettes of Recitation and its Rules, Rule no. 50; ***Wasīlat al-Najāh***; Recitations, Rule no. 14.
2. ***Minhāj al-Ṣāliḥīn***, vol. 1, Book of Ritual Prayer, pg. 167, Issue. 119.
3. ***Taḥrīr al-Wasīlah***, vol. 1, Book of Ritual Prayer, pg. 152, Issue. 14.

concession based on extenuation. They also hold that these two traditions must be seen as complimentary to each other. If looked upon from this perspective, the compound meaning of the two would be that the Holy Qur'ān has only one recitation, revealed by God, but that particular recitation is definitely one of these seven popular styles. Therefore, the legitimacy given to all seven of these styles is to simply provide a concessional relaxation to Muslims.

Imām Khomeini also abides by this interpretation. This is because the meaning of the second tradition, apparently and most probably, deals exclusively with recitations that were popular during that day and age. Having understood this, we find that the popular recitations at that time were, in effect, none other than the seven principle ones mentioned earlier.

However, the late Sayyid Muḥsin al-Ḥakīm , in his commentary upon *al-ʿUrwah al-Wuthqā* entitled *Mustamsak al-ʿUrwah al-Wuthqā*, says, "The said tradition could not have been indicative of the seven principal recitations because the delineation of these said styles took place in the 4th century of Hegira, a good two hundred years after the narrative in question had already come into circulation."[1] Consequently, he believes that the tradition under consideration must also include recitational styles other than the principal seven. Therefore, he deems permissible all recitational styles that enjoyed proven popularity during the period of the immaculate Imams.

We believe that the Holy Qur'ān, revealed by God to the Holy Prophet (ṣ), was one, and only one. This singular Qur'ān has been protected by the people, generation after generation, and its recitation is a recitation learnt by the people from the Prophet (ṣ) himself. It is, in effect, an inherited recitation that has nothing to do with the recitation of the famous Qur'ānic reciters. Their recitations were interpretational, whereas the people's recitation represents an inherited one.

Senior scholars like Badr al-Dīn al-Zarkashī[2] and al-Khū'ī[3] write, "The Qur'ān and the recitations are two separate realities. The first comprises of divine revelation sent down upon the Holy Prophet (ṣ) by God, while the latter consists of the differing opinions of various reciters who interpreted this said revelation. Most of these interpretational disparities originate from the respective reciters' personal preferences." Therefore, the tradition that says, "Recite according to that which the people recite," actually points towards the popular recitation common amongst the people and not the

1. ***Mustamsak Al-ʿUrwah al-Wuthqā***, vol. 6, pg. 242-245.
2. ***Al-Burhān***, vol. 1, pg. 318.
3. ***Al-Bayān***, pg. 173.

specific recitations of a few famous reciters. This is because the people's recitation has always been an inherited one, inherited from the Prophet (ṣ) himself, whereas the recitation of the said reciters is nothing but the result of their own personal interpretations. Thus, the only recitation worthy of probative validity is the one that has remained continuously and overwhelmingly popular amongst the people from the time of the Holy Prophet (ṣ) to the current era. It is this recitation that has remained free of disputes, and has formed the basis of codical inscription throughout Islamic history.

All Qur'ānic codices, throughout Islamic history, have been produced in accordance with the recitation of Ḥafṣ, regardless of them being handwritten or printed.[1] Similarly, the recitation of Ḥafṣ has remained, in the past as well as in the current era, the predominantly popular recitation amongst all Muslims. This is because Ḥafṣ learnt his recitational style from his teacher ʿĀṣim, who in turn learnt it from Abū-ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn Salamah, who learnt it from none other than Imam ʿAlī ibn Abī-Ṭālib (ʿa). This recitation is undoubtedly the recitation of the Holy Prophet (ṣ) himself, and we find its narrative foundations to be strong, as well as abundant.

Imām Khomeini remarks, "Abstention, from going beyond the Qur'ān that is currently available amongst the Muslims, is an act completely in line with the utmost level of dutiful caution."[2]

The Recitation Narrated by Ḥafṣ

The only recitational style possessing a sound narrative foundation, as well as consistent popular appeal amongst the Muslims, is the recitation narrated by Ḥafṣ. The recognition it enjoys has remained steady, century after century, to this very day. The reasons underlining its exceptional fame are as follows:

1. It bears a golden narrative chain, originating from Imam ʿAlī Amīr al-Mu'minīn (ʿa), and reaching Ḥafṣ through only two intermediary sources. Furthermore, all its narrators are renowned individuals, enjoying an impeccable degree of trust amongst the people.

2. It is in accordance with the popular recitation followed by the overwhelming majority of Muslims. ʿĀṣim persistently endeavored to teach Ḥafṣ only the most well-grounded of recitations, recitations which had

1. A codex of the Holy Qur'ān, based on the recitation of Nāfiʿ as narrated by Qālūn, has recently been printed in Libya. The general public, and Muslim leaders belonging to various Islamic countries, have protested against the publication of this new codex.

2. ***Taḥrīr al-Wasīlah***, vol. 1, pg. 152, Issue. 14.

narrative transmissions that could be confirmed and corroborated with certainty. In fact, the methods employed by ʿĀṣim were perfectly suited for finding the singular correct recitational style inherited by the Muslim masses from the Holy Prophet (ṣ) himself.

3. ʿĀṣim's personality was such that the Muslims held him in high regard, and found him to be exceptionally trustworthy. Upon learning a new recitation, he would immediately present it before the earliest companions and the renowned first generation disciples. In fact, he would not accept the legitimacy of any recitation unless his research led him to utter satisfaction with regard to it.[1] These particular traits, and the results they yield, have rendered ʿĀṣim's recitation of the Holy Qur'ān to be the foremost recitation throughout Islamic history. As a result, we find that when Ibn Mujāhid constituted a faculty for recitational tutelage, he focused fifteen individuals exclusively upon ʿĀṣim's recitational style. Similarly, in every recitational session conducted by the celebrated Qur'ānic reciter Ibrāhīm ibn Muḥammad, popularly known as Nifṭawayh (deceased 323 A.H.), the recitational style belonging to ʿĀṣim would take precedence over all others.[2]

According to Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal's juristic opinion, the only legitimate recitational style is the one narrated by ʿĀṣim. Likewise, the religious jurists and scholars of the Imāmiyyah Shīʿah school of thought have always held ʿĀṣim's recitation, as narrated by Ḥafṣ, in high esteem. This is because Ḥafṣ is known to be the most aware of individuals to have narrated ʿĀṣim's particular style.[3]

1. Refer to: Al-Dhahabī, ***Maʿrifat al-Qurrā' al-Kibār***, vol. 1, pg. 75.
2. Ibid, vol. 1, pg. 217; Ibn Ḥajar, ***Lisān al-Mīzān***, vol. 1, pg. 109.
3. ***Al-Tamhīd***, vol. 2, pg. 232-236.

CHAPTER FIVE:
REFUTATION OF ANY POSSIBLE TEXTUAL CORRUPTION

Claims of textual corruption in the Holy Qur'ān have existed since past times, but senior Islamic scholars and researchers have consistently been able to refute and neutralize any such assertions. However, some individuals, marked by their shaky academic foundations and relative ignorance of principal Islamic beliefs, have insisted upon these allegations far too seriously. As a result, they have chosen to present reconciliatory explanations instead of clear rebuttals. The source, or fountainhead, of such claims is a group of traditions, found in Sunni and Shīʿah texts, apparently indicative of textual alterations in the Holy Qur'ān. These traditions are such that a vast majority of them are easily interpretable in accordance with Islamic ideological principles. As for the remainder of such narrations, there is no obstacle refraining us from conveniently placing them aside.

The importance of analyzing such claims stems from the fact that they seek to challenge the probative validity of the Qur'ānic text. Therefore, all such instances require meticulous study so that the strength or weakness of the said traditions can be established and made apparent for all to see.

We have divided this discussion into ***three*** portions. ***One***, arguments presented by researchers in refutation of all such assertions; ***two,*** opinions held by senior Islamic scholars with reference to this issue; and ***three,*** analysis of relevant traditions from Sunni and Shīʿah sources.

Literal Definition of taḥrīf

The Arabic word *taḥrīf* (تحريف) originates from the root *ḥ-r-f* meaning "to discard or lay aside." In verse 11 of Sūrah al-Ḥajj, we find this root word being used as such:

﴿ وَمِنَ ٱلنَّاسِ مَن يَعۡبُدُ ٱللَّهَ عَلَىٰ حَرۡفٖۖ فَإِنۡ أَصَابَهُۥ خَيۡرٌ ٱطۡمَأَنَّ بِهِۦۖ وَإِنۡ أَصَابَتۡهُ فِتۡنَةٌ ٱنقَلَبَ عَلَىٰ وَجۡهِهِۦ خَسِرَ ٱلدُّنۡيَا وَٱلۡأٓخِرَةَۚ ذَٰلِكَ هُوَ ٱلۡخُسۡرَانُ ٱلۡمُبِينُ ﴾

"And among men is he who serves Allah (standing) on the verge, so that if good befalls him he is satisfied therewith, but if a trial afflict him he turns back headlong; he loses this world as well as the hereafter; that is a manifest loss." [1]

Al-Zamakhsharī, in his exposition of this verse, says, "They constantly occupy space at the fringes of religion, and are not found in its middle or in its heart. This is because of their doubt-ridden souls. They are a people inflicted by persistent anxiety. These individuals are like those moving within the flanks of an army. You find them firm in their place only when victory occurs and booty is distributed. Otherwise, you see them fleeing away, constantly fearing for their own lives."[2]

The word *taḥrīf* when used for the Holy Qur'ān, signifies divergence from the book's natural course. The natural course for a word is to understand it according to its actual meaning; therefore, any divergence from this actual meaning would bring textual corruption into existence. Thus, in defining textual corruption, it has been said, "(It is the) comprehension and explanation of a text, occurring in a manner that opposes the apparent meaning that this text conveys." Such a distortion is called "semantical corruption." In such a case, the meanings of a word are flipped around and made to signify something entirely different from what the word naturally indicates.

When the Holy Qur'ān speaks of the phenomenon of *taḥrīf* it consistently means semantical distortion.

﴿ فَبِمَا نَقْضِهِم مِّيثَٰقَهُمْ لَعَنَّٰهُمْ وَجَعَلْنَا قُلُوبَهُمْ قَٰسِيَةً ۖ يُحَرِّفُونَ ٱلْكَلِمَ عَن مَّوَاضِعِهِۦ ۙ وَنَسُوا۟ حَظًّا مِّمَّا ذُكِّرُوا۟ بِهِۦ ۚ وَلَا تَزَالُ تَطَّلِعُ عَلَىٰ خَآئِنَةٍ مِّنْهُمْ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا مِّنْهُمْ ۖ فَٱعْفُ عَنْهُمْ وَٱصْفَحْ ۚ إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ يُحِبُّ ٱلْمُحْسِنِينَ ﴾

"But on account of their breaking their covenant We cursed them and made their hearts hard; they altered the words from their places and they neglected a portion of what they were reminded of; and you shall always discover treachery in them excepting a few of them; so pardon them and turn away; surely Allah loves those who do good (to others)."[3]

1. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Ḥajj (22:11).
2. ***Al-Kashshāf***, vol. 2, pg. 142.
3. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Mā'idah (5:13).

﴿ مِّنَ ٱلَّذِينَ هَادُواْ يُحَرِّفُونَ ٱلۡكَلِمَ عَن مَّوَاضِعِهِۦ وَيَقُولُونَ سَمِعۡنَا وَعَصَيۡنَا وَٱسۡمَعۡ غَيۡرَ مُسۡمَعٖ وَرَٰعِنَا لَيَّۢا بِأَلۡسِنَتِهِمۡ وَطَعۡنٗا فِي ٱلدِّينِۚ وَلَوۡ أَنَّهُمۡ قَالُواْ سَمِعۡنَا وَأَطَعۡنَا وَٱسۡمَعۡ وَٱنظُرۡنَا لَكَانَ خَيۡرٗا لَّهُمۡ وَأَقۡوَمَ وَلَٰكِن لَّعَنَهُمُ ٱللَّهُ بِكُفۡرِهِمۡ فَلَا يُؤۡمِنُونَ إِلَّا قَلِيلٗا ﴾

*"Of those who are Jews (there are those who) alter words from their places and say: We have heard and we disobey and: Hear, may you not be made to hear! and: **Raina**, distorting (the word) with their tongues and taunting about religion; and if they had said (instead): We have heard and we obey, and hearken, and **unzurna** it would have been better for them and more upright; but Allah has cursed them on account of their unbelief, so they do not believe but a little."* [1]

In his exegesis of the above verses, al-Ṭabarsī writes, "They would interpret God's words in a manner opposed to what God actually intended. This act represents the worst kind of exegetic distortion."[2]

Al-Zamakhsharī, while explaining the same verses, says, "They would take the words away from their rightful places."[3]

Both expositions confirm that any interpretation of a given word that goes against its apparent meanings must be considered a semantic deviation. Al-Shaʿrānī, in his marginal notes upon the book *Majmaʿ al-Bayān*, writes, "The rightful place of a word is its original meaning. This is because each word has been coined for a particular meaning, and if a certain interpretation changes this assigned meaning, it has, in effect, deviated the word from its rightful position."

With regard to this issue, al-Zamakhsharī notes, "Every word has a rightful place in itself. This rightful place is, in fact, the original meaning coined for that word. Similarly, the correct usage of a word is one that takes place in accordance with this original meaning. Therefore, any other usage would only lead to the word becoming divergent and lost in terms of significance."[4]

Imam al-Bāqir (ʿa) is narrated to have said,

1. The Holy Qurʾān, Sūrah al-Nisāʾ (4:46).
2. ***Tafsīr al-Ṭabarsī***, vol. 2, pg. 173.
3. ***Al-Kashshāf***, vol. 1, pg. 516.
4. Maʿrifat, Muḥammad Hādī, ***Ṣiyānat al-Qurʾān min al-Taḥrīf***, pg. 15

> "As for those who turned their backs upon the book of God, they kept the words unchanged, but altered the meanings and the laws pertaining to these words."[1]

In this tradition, the Imam underlines the basic traits of semantic corruption.

The Technical Meaning of taḥrīf

There are seven technical meanings of the term *taḥrīf*. These are as follows:

1. Semantic distortion meant interpretations in opposition of, and contradictory to, the apparent and original meanings of a text. Expositions that run contrary to all available contextual evidence, and are simply based on the whims and fancies of a certain Qur'ānic commentator. Such explanations are often called "subjective expositions," because they merely represent the uncorroborated personal opinions of an exegete. The Holy Prophet (ṣ) said,

> "He who interprets the Holy Qur'ān based upon his personal views, must surely seek his place in hellfire."[2]

2. Sequential Distortion meant placing a verse, or a chapter, in a spot different from its original position, in terms of the sequence of descent, while compiling a codex. This kind of repositioning has definitely taken place when it comes to Qur'ānic chapters; but, when speaking of verses, such a relocation is highly unlikely.

3. Recitational Distortion meant differences that emerged in recitations and led to the creation of recitational interpretations contrary to the mainstream recitational style. Such instances have occurred, from time to time, starting right from the early days of Islamic history.

4. Vernacular Distortions: Different Arab tribes would recite the Holy Qur'ān in accordance to their own regional dialects, whereas the Qur'ān had originally been revealed in the superior and formal Arabic dialect of the Quraysh tribe. However, the Holy Prophet (ṣ) had deemed such variations permissible, and had declared, "The Qur'ān descended in seven letters," wherein, the word "letters" signifies dialects.

5. Word Replacement Distortion meant ***t***he deletion of a certain Qur'ānic word and the placement of a synonym in its position. It is said that ʿAbdullāh ibn Masʿūd believed such a practice to be legitimate, and often replaced tough Qur'ānic words with simpler synonyms, making comprehension easier. However, even in such an exceptional case, care was taken not to alter the original meaning of the Qur'ānic text.

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1. ***Al-Kāfī***, vol. 8, pg. 53, Tradition no. 16.
2. ***Ghawālī al-La'ālī***, vol. 4, pg. 104, Tradition no. 154.

6. Distortion by Addition meant the addition of words, sentences, verses or even whole chapters to the Holy Qur'ān. In has been narrated that ʿAbdullāh ibn Masʿūd would add words and phrases, in between Qur'ānic words, as explanatory notes to the actual text. In one such case, he added the phrase, "Surely ʿAlī is the commander of the faithful" to the verse of *tablīgh* or propagation. As a result, he recited the verse as such:

*"O Apostle! Deliver what has been revealed to you from your Lord - **that surely ʿAlī is the commander of the faithful** - ; and if you do it not, then you have not delivered His message, and Allah will protect you from the people; surely Allah will not guide the unbelieving people."*[1]

Similarly, the Jārūdiyyah (a group of Khawārij rebels who followed a man named Ibn al-Jārūd) believed that Sūrah Yūsuf was an addition to the Holy Qur'ān.[2]

7. Distortion by Deletion: Some believe that the Qur'ān, originally revealed by God to His Prophet (ṣ), was far lengthier than the Qur'ān we have today. They hold that certain portions of this revealed text were deleted or lost, either by mistake or on purpose. Most discussions surrounding the issue of textual corruption actually deal with this particular instance. At the centre of such discussions are traditions of the Ahl al-Sunnah narrated by a group called the Ḥashawiyyah[3] and Shīʿah traditions narrated by the Akhbāriyyah.[4] However, these fringe groups aside, an overwhelming consensus negating any such omission or deletion exists within the Muslim nation.

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1. The Holy Qur'ān: Sūrah al-Mā'idah (5:48).
2. Shahristānī al-, ʿAbd al-Karīm, ***Al-Milal wa'l-Niḥal***, vol. 1, pg. 128.
3. They were called Ḥashwiyyah because they collected Prophetic traditions and stored them in leather bags. The Arabic word *ḥashw* literally means scrip or a leather bag. Ibn al-Jazī says, "They persistently tried to make people recognize as legitimate, all traditions that they had in their possession, regardless of whether these traditions were authentic or not. This was truly an abhorrent practice, because the Holy Prophet (ṣ) has openly declared, 'Any one who narrates a tradition attributed to me, while knowing that it is fabricated, is indeed a lying deceiver'." (***Al-Mawḍūʿāt,*** vol. 1, pg. 240).
4. Traditionally, the word *akhbārī* was used to denote scholars who diligently focused themselves upon collecting narrated traditions of the Holy Prophet (ṣ) and his immaculate progeny. However, from the 11th century onwards, the word has come to signify any collector of traditions who exercises the utmost leniency when amassing narrative texts. Such individuals were marked by their tendency to accept any narration from any source without the least bit of caution. (For further details, refer to: "***Ṣiyānat al-Qur'ān min al-Taḥrīf***, pg. 109 and, pg. 157 onwards).

Refutative Proof in Negation of Textual Corruption

Herein, we shall present a collection of summarized excerpts, taken from the works of various Islamic scholars, concerning the issue of textual corruption. These excerpts have been extracted from books of theology and theoretical jurisprudence.

1. Historical Evidence

Muslims have given great importance and exceptional attention to the Holy Qur'ān, consistently, throughout Islamic history. During his own lifetime, the Holy Prophet (ṣ) assiduously stood guard over the Holy Qur'ān and protected it from all instances of corruption. Throughout his prophetic mission, he commanded the Muslims to memorize, inscribe and store Qur'ānic texts. As a result, numerous manuscripts came into existence, and were carefully preserved within boxes, or specially prepared bags. From the very beginning, Muslims were wholeheartedly engaged in memorizing the Holy Qur'ān and, therefore, we find an abundant number of Qur'ān memorizers within the early Muslim community. In fact, these individuals were held in high esteem by Muslim masses and, thus, enjoyed a lofty social status. Apart from the production of personal manuscripts, many codices of the Holy Qur'ān were also prepared so that they could be dispatched to all four corners of the Islamic state.

In short, ever since the inception of the Islamic creed, the most effective guardians of this heavenly text have been the Muslim masses themselves. Never were they heedless with regard to the Holy Qur'ān, nor did negligence impede them in their efforts to safe guard this celestial message.

Apart from the Muslim masses, great Islamic scholars have also played a pivotal role in ascertaining and safeguarding the Holy Qur'ān's rightful position in society. In fact, the Qur'ān has always been extremely consequential in almost all matters concerning the Muslim nation. In Islamic academia, the Holy Qur'ān has formed the foundations of many Muslim sciences. Islamic academics, no matter what their specializations may be, have always sought guidance from the eternal message of this divine book. In reality, many Islamic sciences came into being for the explicit purpose of studying and comprehending this great message, and similarly, many others were formed as a result of inspiration derived from this magnificent book. Therefore, we find Muslim scholars constantly needing the Holy Qur'ān, continuously turning to its text, and placing it in the foremost position within their priorities.

Sayyid Murtaḍā ʿAlam al-Hudā, while speaking on this topic, argues:

"Definitive certitude with regard to the narrative veracity of the Holy Qur'ān is similar to the certitude we have about our knowledge of great cities, significant historic events, renowned historical books and their authors, and famous pieces of poetry created by celebrated poets of the past. In fact, when compared to these instances, the attention, protection and care enjoyed by the Holy Qur'ān has always been exceptionally greater. This is because the Qur'ān represents the eternal miracle of the Holy Prophet (ṣ) and is proof of his prophetic mission. It has remained the fundamental source of religious knowledge and jurisprudence for all Muslims. Therefore, Islamic scholars have spared no effort in trying to safeguard it from all possible threats. They have studied every little detail of the divine book scrupulously, recording every minute specification, to the extent that they have even catalogued individual inflexion marks of Qur'ānic words. In addition, these scholars have also recorded the respective recitations of the Holy Qur'ān, the number of letters used in the holy book, the amount of words found in its text, and the quantity of total verses incorporated into its chapters. With such punctilious care and protection, how is it imaginable that the Qur'ān could have undergone any sort of alteration? ...

…Certitude with regard to the details of the Holy Qur'ān and its contents is equivalent to the certitude we have about the Qur'ān in its totality. The Holy Qur'ān, in this respect, is similar to famous academic writings like the ones penned by Sībawayh and al-Māzinī. These books formed required reading material for all Muslim scholars and, as a result, the most infinitesimal of details found within their covers came to be preserved. Muslim scholars were so familiar with every single word written in these books that any sort of addition or deletion would instantaneously become apparent to them. In fact, any such manipulation would stand out, noticeably, and be identified as an alien element.

…Based on the argument already presented above, it is self apparent that the Holy Qur'ān enjoyed far greater attention, in terms of efforts directed towards its preservation and protection, than any book written by Sībawayh or al-Māzinī."[1]

Shaykh Jaʿfar Kāshif al-Ghiṭā' has presented a similar argument with regard to this matter:

"Traditions indicating deletions from the Holy Qur'ān are known to be unacceptable, and their apparent meanings are totally inadmissible. This is especially true for traditions that claim the deletion of a third of the Qur'ān's text (which come to around two thousand verses). If such a deletion had actually taken place, its infamy would have definitely become wide-spread.

1. Refer to: ***Tafsīr al-Ṭabarsī***, vol. 1, Introduction, Part 5, pg. 15.

Such an occurrence would have undoubtedly attracted the ever vigilant attentions of Islam's numerous enemies. They, in turn, would have pounced upon this opportunity, using it as evidence to defame the Holy Qur'ān.

…How could such an incident be conceivable when Muslim men, with extraordinary acumen, were continuously engaged in affirming the Holy Qur'ān's protection and safety? We find in some traditions that the Holy Qur'ān contained names of various hypocrites, but these names were subsequently omitted. How can such a thing be imaginable when we know that the Holy Prophet (ṣ), due to his mercy and wisdom, always refrained from naming such individuals?

…A group of individuals, astonishingly, claim that the traditions of the Holy Prophet (ṣ) have remained preserved and untouched by corruption over the one thousand years that have passed since the time of the Sacred Apostle (ṣ). They argue that this protection has been due to the continuous scholastic attention given to prophetic traditions within Muslim academic circles. They proclaim, "If these traditions had experienced even the slightest degree of infringement, such a transgression would surely have become evident for all to see." However, when it comes to the Holy Qur'ān, they argue that deletions have taken place in its text, and that these deletions have remained secret, even though the amount of attention and preservation the Qur'ān enjoyed, in terms of being continuously read and recorded, is far greater than the attention bestowed by Muslims to the said prophetic traditions."[1]

2. The Necessity of the Qur'ān's Unbroken Narrative Transmission

One of the crucial pieces of evidence presented in negation of textual corruption within the Holy Qur'ān is the argument pertaining to the necessity of this book's unbroken narrative transmission. Acceptance of the Holy Qur'ān, as the final word of God, depends on the establishment of this unbroken chain. Every single detail of this divine book, including the words found therein, or the letters making up the words, or the inflexion marks, or even the diacritic symbols, must all possess unbroken chains of narrative transmission. This is to say that every single detail of the Holy Qur'ān must be such that it be narrated, generation after generation, by an overwhelming majority within the Muslim masses. Therefore, when it is claimed that a certain word, phrase or sentence, is part of the Holy Qur'ān, just because a certain individual narrated it to be so, this claim will be considered void and without value because it contradicts the foundational rule discussed above. This matter is considered a fundamental doctrinal tenet and enjoys unanimous acceptance within Muslim scholars. In reality, solitary narrations are deemed worthless when it comes to fundamental and theological issues.

1. ***Kashf al-Ghiṭā'; Kitāb al-Qur'ān; Kitāb al-Ṣalāt,*** Discussion 7 & 8, pg. 298-299.

They are only acceptable in matters of secondary or practical significance.

ʿAllāmah al-Ḥillī, negating the possibility of textual corruption, writes the following:

"Scholars unanimously agree that, with regard to the Holy Qur'ān, only texts bearing unbroken narrative transmissions possess probative validity. Any text claiming to be part of the Holy Qur'ān, but deficient of such an unbroken chain, is utterly empty of value. This is because the Holy Qur'ān is a living proof of the Prophet's divine mission, as well as an eternal miracle of Islam. If it were lacking an unbroken narrative chain, it could not have led us to certitude with regard to the veracity of the Prophet's mission. Therefore, it is not possible for us to accept traditions, reported by various narrators, contradicting this basic principle concerning the Holy Qur'ān's text, especially when such traditions are themselves devoid of unbroken chains of transmission. Narrations transmitted by solitary narrators on the pretext that they constitute parts of the Holy Qur'ān are considered erroneous without exception, no matter how honest the said narrators may be. However, if a given narration does not claim inclusion into the Qur'ānic text, it will naturally fall into one of these two categories; it will either be classified as a prophetic tradition, or be categorized as a personal opinion of the narrator in question. In either case, the source of any possible probative validity, that this narration may enjoy, will definitely not be Qur'ānic in nature."[1]

Similar arguments are presented by Sayyid Mujāhid Ṭabāṭabā'ī in his book, *Wasā'il al-Uṣūl*, al-Muḥaqqiq al-Ardabīlī in his book *Sharḥ al-Irshād*, and Sayyid Muḥammad Jawād al-ʿĀmilī in his book *Miftāḥ al-Karāmah*.[2]

3. The Miraculous Nature of the Holy Qur'ān

The Holy Qur'ān's miraculous nature does not allow us to entertain the possibility of textual corruption within its divine text. In fact, this key issue dictates that any such alterations be deemed utterly impossible. Scholars have long held this issue to be a definitive proof against any claims of manipulation within the Qur'ānic text. According to their point of view, any addition to this divine manuscript is simply out of the question (An example of such a proposed addition is one attributed to the Holy Book by the Khawārij, when they claimed that Sūrah Yūsuf was not originally part of the Holy Qur'ān). Similarly, any reduction is also totally unacceptable (Examples of such proposed reductions include the ones carried out by ʿAbdullāh ibn Masʿūd when he deleted Sūrah al-Falaq and Sūrah al-Nās from his Qur'ānic codex). Their argument rests on the impossibility of man-

1. Al-Borojerdī, ***Al-Burhān***, pg. 111.
2. Refer to: ***Ṣiyānat al-Qur'ān min al-Taḥrīf***, pg. 38-39.

made texts being equal, or even comparable, to the words of God in the Holy Qur'ān. If any such addition or reduction were possible, it would entail that there existed a text, so similar to the Holy Qur'ān itself, that people were unable to distinguish one from the other. Naturally, this would dictate a qualitative equality, in terms of beauty, precision and eloquence, between the said text and true Qur'ānic content. From the perspective of Islamic scholars, such an occurrence is absolutely impossible. God has declared in the Holy Qur'ān:

﴿ قُل لَّئِنِ ٱجْتَمَعَتِ ٱلْإِنسُ وَٱلْجِنُّ عَلَىٰٓ أَن يَأْتُوا۟ بِمِثْلِ هَٰذَا ٱلْقُرْءَانِ لَا يَأْتُونَ بِمِثْلِهِۦ وَلَوْ كَانَ بَعْضُهُمْ لِبَعْضٍ ظَهِيرًا ﴾

"Say: If men and jinn should combine together to bring the like of this Qur'ān, they could not bring the like of it, though some of them were aiders of others."[1]

﴿ وَإِن كُنتُمْ فِى رَيْبٍ مِّمَّا نَزَّلْنَا عَلَىٰ عَبْدِنَا فَأْتُوا۟ بِسُورَةٍ مِّن مِّثْلِهِۦ وَٱدْعُوا۟ شُهَدَآءَكُم مِّن دُونِ ٱللَّهِ إِن كُنتُمْ صَٰدِقِينَ ﴾

"And if you are in doubt as to that which We have revealed to Our servant, then produce a chapter like it and call on your witnesses besides Allah if you are truthful."[2]

﴿ أَمْ يَقُولُونَ ٱفْتَرَىٰهُ ۖ قُلْ فَأْتُوا۟ بِسُورَةٍ مِّثْلِهِۦ وَٱدْعُوا۟ مَنِ ٱسْتَطَعْتُم مِّن دُونِ ٱللَّهِ إِن كُنتُمْ صَٰدِقِينَ ﴾

"Or do they say: He has forged it? Say: Then bring a chapter like this and invite whom you can besides Allah, if you are truthful."[3]

Verses such as these are called verses of *tahaddī* which means that they indicate an open challenge from God to all people. If it were possible for someone to create a chapter like Sūrah Yūsuf, and then have it included into the Holy Qur'ān, such a possibility would dictate that God's challenge be defeated. Whereas, we know that it is inherently impossible for anyone to defeat God.

The same is true with respect to any alteration in Qur'ānic words, a possibility mentioned by individuals like Shaykh al-Nūrī, and Sayyid al-Jazā'irī before him. Any change in the words themselves, the sequence of

1. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Isrā' (17:88).
2. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Baqarah (2:23).
3. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah Yūnus (10:38).

Qur'ānic words or the structure of Qur'ānic sentences would entail that these words or sentences be the handiwork of a writer other than the Almighty. In such a case, these texts would no longer be considered divine revelations. However, proponents of such changes have claimed that alterations of this sort have taken place in the following verse of the Holy Qur'ān:[1]

﴿ فَلَمَّا قَضَيْنَا عَلَيْهِ ٱلْمَوْتَ مَا دَلَّهُمْ عَلَىٰ مَوْتِهِۦٓ إِلَّا دَآبَّةُ ٱلْأَرْضِ تَأْكُلُ مِنسَأَتَهُۥ ۖ فَلَمَّا خَرَّ تَبَيَّنَتِ ٱلْجِنُّ أَن لَّوْ كَانُوا۟ يَعْلَمُونَ ٱلْغَيْبَ مَا لَبِثُوا۟ فِى ٱلْعَذَابِ ٱلْمُهِينِ ﴾

"But when We decreed death for him, naught showed them his death but a creature of the earth that ate away his staff; and when it fell down, the jinn came to know plainly that if they had known the unseen, they would not have tarried in abasing torment." [2]

Similarly, claims of the same nature have been made with regard to the following Qur'ānic verse:[3]

﴿ كُنتُمْ خَيْرَ أُمَّةٍ أُخْرِجَتْ لِلنَّاسِ تَأْمُرُونَ بِٱلْمَعْرُوفِ وَتَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ ٱلْمُنكَرِ وَتُؤْمِنُونَ بِٱللَّهِ ۗ وَلَوْ ءَامَنَ أَهْلُ ٱلْكِتَٰبِ لَكَانَ خَيْرًا لَّهُم ۚ مِّنْهُمُ ٱلْمُؤْمِنُونَ وَأَكْثَرُهُمُ ٱلْفَٰسِقُونَ ﴾

"You are the best of the nations raised up for (the benefit of) men; you enjoin what is right and forbid the wrong and believe in Allah; and if the followers of the Book had believed it would have been better for them; of them (some) are believers and most of them are transgressors."[4]

Likewise, any reduction of the Qur'ānic text would automatically have an effect on the Qur'ān's overall flow, thereby depleting its eloquence and overall aesthetic value. Any such reduction would bring into existence a new flow, and sequence of interconnected elements, other than the flow created by God. This new structure would no longer represent divine revelation. The strangest of claims, made by proponents of this kind of textual corruption, is the claim pertaining to the deletion of two thousand Qur'ānic verses (something equal to one third of the Holy Book's text) from in between the following verse:

1. Refer to: ***Biḥār al-Anwār, (Tafsīr al-Nuʿmānī)***, vol. 90, pg. 26-27.
2. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah Saba' (34:14).
3. Refer to: Sayyid Niʿmatullāh al-Jazā'irī, ***Manbaʿ al-Ḥayāt***, pg. 67.
4. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah Āl-ʿImrān (3:110).

﴿ وَإِنۡ خِفۡتُمۡ أَلَّا تُقۡسِطُواْ فِي ٱلۡيَتَٰمَىٰ فَٱنكِحُواْ مَا طَابَ لَكُم مِّنَ ٱلنِّسَآءِ مَثۡنَىٰ وَثُلَٰثَ وَرُبَٰعَۖ فَإِنۡ خِفۡتُمۡ أَلَّا تَعۡدِلُواْ فَوَٰحِدَةً أَوۡ مَا مَلَكَتۡ أَيۡمَٰنُكُمۡۚ ذَٰلِكَ أَدۡنَىٰٓ أَلَّا تَعُولُواْ ﴾

"And if you fear that you cannot act equitably towards orphans, then marry such women as seem good to you, two and three and four; but if you fear that you will not do justice (between them), then (marry) only one or what your right hands possess; this is more proper, that you may not deviate from the right course."[1]

They believe that a large portion of the Holy Qur'ān's text existed somewhere in between this verse, and its omission has led to a collapse in the overall structure of the said section. Such assertions are truly nothing but fantasies created by worn out minds.

In short, any sort of addition or reduction from the Holy Qur'ān stands in stark opposition to the book's miraculous nature.

4. Divine Guarantee

One of the most powerful pieces of evidence, indicating the impossibility of textual corruption within the Holy Qur'ān, is God's personal guarantee wherein He promises to protect His divine message from all sorts of alterations. We see this guarantee being spelled out in the following verse:

﴿ إِنَّا نَحۡنُ نَزَّلۡنَا ٱلذِّكۡرَ وَإِنَّا لَهُۥ لَحَٰفِظُونَ ﴾

"Surely We have revealed the Reminder and We will most surely be its guardian." [2]

Indeed, the doctrine of "Divine Grace" dictates that the Holy Qur'ān be protected from all kinds of malicious changes. This is because the Holy Qur'ān represents conclusive proof of the authenticity of Islam and the veracity of the Holy Prophet (ṣ). Any possibility of corruption within its text would effectively bring into question the very foundations of religion, whereas such an event is contrary to what the intellect commands regarding this issue.

When we speak of God's promise and guarantee in this matter, we understand it to be a guarantee for the protection of the Holy Qur'ān that exists within the hands of the Muslim masses. It is not a guarantee that applies exclusively to a Qur'ān that exists within the "Secured Tablet" of God's heavenly realm, or a promise that finds substantiation only with

1. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Nisā' (4:3).
2. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Ḥijr (15:9).

regard to a Qur'ān preserved within the hearts of the immaculate Imams. In fact, this second interpretation, propagated by individuals such as *Ḥājī Nūrī,*[1] effectively negates the purpose of God's promise, for what need is there to protect an object that exists in a place where no enemy can ever threaten it. However, if this divine guarantee applies to the Holy Qur'ān that has existed amongst the people, then this said promise bears great worth indeed, for we know that this external and visible Qur'ān has continuously been a target of persistent opposition. We find God declaring within the Holy Qur'ān:

﴿ إِنَّ ٱلَّذِينَ كَفَرُواْ بِٱلذِّكۡرِ لَمَّا جَآءَهُمۡۖ وَإِنَّهُۥ لَكِتَٰبٌ عَزِيزٞ ۝٤١ لَّا يَأۡتِيهِ ٱلۡبَٰطِلُ مِنۢ بَيۡنِ يَدَيۡهِ وَلَا مِنۡ خَلۡفِهِۦۖ تَنزِيلٞ مِّنۡ حَكِيمٍ حَمِيدٖ ۝٤٢ ﴾

"Surely those who disbelieve in the reminder when it comes to them, and most surely it is a Mighty Book: Falsehood (Annulment) shall not come to it from before it nor from behind it; a revelation from the Wise, the Praised One."[2]

This particular verse repeats, in a more explicit manner, the message already mentioned in the verse we quoted earlier. It clearly states that the Holy Qur'ān has been protected against all odds in the past, and this defense will continue unhampered into the future. Never will the Holy Qur'ān be allowed to undergo corruption or annulment. The word "annulment," herein, means any alteration that may lead to the Holy Qur'ān losing its fundamental authenticity. God is wise and His actions are free of futility. He is eternally praised and His actions are the focus of admiration. Therefore, the Holy Qur'ān, with its glorified descent from the most hallowed of origins, stands firm and steadfast with its future guaranteed by divine decree. God himself proclaims:

﴿ وَلَوۡ أَنَّ قُرۡءَانٗا سُيِّرَتۡ بِهِ ٱلۡجِبَالُ أَوۡ قُطِّعَتۡ بِهِ ٱلۡأَرۡضُ أَوۡ كُلِّمَ بِهِ ٱلۡمَوۡتَىٰۗ بَل لِّلَّهِ ٱلۡأَمۡرُ جَمِيعًاۗ أَفَلَمۡ يَاْيۡـَٔسِ ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوٓاْ أَن لَّوۡ يَشَآءُ ٱللَّهُ لَهَدَى ٱلنَّاسَ جَمِيعٗاۗ وَلَا يَزَالُ ٱلَّذِينَ كَفَرُواْ تُصِيبُهُم بِمَا صَنَعُواْ قَارِعَةٌ أَوۡ تَحُلُّ قَرِيبٗا مِّن دَارِهِمۡ حَتَّىٰ يَأۡتِيَ وَعۡدُ ٱللَّهِۚ إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ لَا يُخۡلِفُ ٱلۡمِيعَادَ ﴾

"And even if there were a Qur'ān with which the mountains were made to pass away, or the earth were travelled over with it, or the dead were made to speak thereby; nay! the commandment is wholly Allah's, Have not yet those who believe known that if Allah please He would certainly guide all the people? And (as for)

1. Nūrī al-, Muḥammad Ḥusayn, ***Faṣl al-Khiṭāb***, pg. 360.
2. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah Fuṣṣilat (41:41-42).

those who disbelieve, there will not cease to afflict them, because of what they do, a repelling calamity, or it will alight close by their abodes, until the promise of Allah comes about; surely Allah will not fail in (His) promise."[1]

5. Proof within Prophetic Traditions

Another proof, in refutation of any possible corruption within the Holy Qur'ān, is this tradition of the Blessed Prophet (ṣ). He says,

> "Upon each truth there exists an actuality (guiding all wayfarers to this truth), and upon each reality there exists an illuminating light (indicating the path that leads to this reality), therefore, take (from amongst my traditions) whatever you find to be in accordance with the Holy Qur'ān, and leave that which runs contrary to it."[2]

How could the Holy Prophet (ṣ) have declared the Holy Qur'ān to be a definitive criterion in judging the authenticity of his own traditions, if it were possible for the Qur'ān to undergo corruption? Indeed, the Prophet's declaration necessitates that the Holy Qur'ān be impeccably incorruptible. The divine book must remain pure of any distortions, so that it may stand firm as a definitive standard, separating truth from falsehood.

6. Narratives from the Ahl al-Bayt (ʿa)

There exist a special group of traditions narrated from the Ahl al-Bayt (ʿa) refuting any possible corruption within the Qur'ānic text. Therefore, in line with the teachings of their immaculate Imams (ʿa), it has been the solemn belief of Muslims, belonging to the Shīʿah Imāmiyyah school of thought, that the Holy Qur'ān has remained protected from corruption throughout its history.

Herein, we shall present a few such narrations:

Tradition no. 1:

In a letter written by Imam Muḥammad al-Bāqir (ʿa) to Saʿd al-Khayr we find these words,

> "Those who turned their backs upon the book of God. They kept the words unchanged, but altered the meanings and the laws pertaining to these words."

This tradition indicates that, even though semantic distortion took place with regard to the Holy Qur'ān, the text itself remained safe of any alterations. In another similar tradition we find the Imam (ʿa) using the word 'wasted' in

1. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Raʿd (13:31).
2. ***Uṣūl Al-Kāfī***, vol. 1, pg. 69.

reference to the meanings of Qur'ānic words. He says,

> "Those who recite the Qur'ān have protected its words, but have wasted its meanings."[1]

Tradition no. 2:

Abū-Baṣīr questioned Imam al-Ṣādiq (ʿa) about this verse:

﴿ يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوٓاْ أَطِيعُواْ ٱللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُواْ ٱلرَّسُولَ وَأُوْلِي ٱلۡأَمۡرِ مِنكُمۡۖ فَإِن تَنَٰزَعۡتُمۡ فِي شَيۡءٖ فَرُدُّوهُ إِلَى ٱللَّهِ وَٱلرَّسُولِ إِن كُنتُمۡ تُؤۡمِنُونَ بِٱللَّهِ وَٱلۡيَوۡمِ ٱلۡأٓخِرِۚ ذَٰلِكَ خَيۡرٞ وَأَحۡسَنُ تَأۡوِيلًا ﴾

"O you who believe! obey Allah and obey the Apostle and those in authority from among you; then if you quarrel about anything, refer it to Allah and the Apostle, if you believe in Allah and the last day; this is better and very good in the end."[2]

He said, "Why has God Almighty refrained from explicitly naming ʿAlī (ʿa) and the members of his family within this verse of the Holy Qur'ān?"

To this the Imam (ʿa) replied,

> "The Qur'ān has spoken of daily ritual prayer, deeming it obligatory, but has refrained from listing all the details and pre-requisites relevant to it. The Holy Prophet (ṣ), in turn, was responsible for elaborating upon these details."[3]

We understand, from this tradition, that only generalities related to religious obligations and laws were mentioned in the Holy Qur'ān, whereas the exposition of all relevant details were left by God to His Blessed Prophet (ṣ). Therefore, the Imam (ʿa) explains that ʿAlī's (ʿa) name, or the names of his family members, were not to be mentioned in the Holy Qur'ān, but were to be articulated by the Holy Prophet (ṣ) himself, very much like the matter concerning daily ritual prayers. In view of this fact, the inadmissibility of all traditions claiming that ʿAlī's (ʿa) name, and the names of his family members, were originally present within the Holy Qur'ān but later deleted, becomes apparent.

Tradition no. 3:

Shaykh al-Mufīd narrates from Jābir, who in turn narrates from Imam al-Bāqir (ʿa), that the Imam (ʿa) said,

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1. ***Uṣūl Al-Kāfī***, vol. 2, pg. 627.
2. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Nisā' (4:59).
3. ***Uṣūl Al-Kāfī***, vol. 1, pg. 286.

> "When Imam al-Mahdī (ʿa) reappears, he shall teach the Holy Qur'ān to the people. The greatest difficulty faced during this process will be due to the sequence of the Qur'ānic codex, since the sequence of the Imam's (ʿa) codex will be different from the one adhered to by the people."[1]

This tradition shows us that the only difference between the Qur'ān of Imam Mahdī (ʿa) and the Qur'ān we have at our disposal today is the sequence of Qur'ānic chapters.

7. The Opinion of Senior Shīʿah Scholars

The opinion of senior Shīʿah scholars, with reference to the issue of corruption within the Qur'ānic text, is noteworthy at this stage of our discussion. An analysis of their views makes it evident that they have always resisted any such allegations made against the Holy Qur'ān. Citing their opinions herein will also show the utter mendacity of defamatory claims made against these esteemed Islamic scholars. However, it must be acknowledged that a few extremist Akhbāriyyah thinkers have, in the past, been guilty of uttering some baseless comments in favor of textual corruption within the Holy Qur'ān. Nevertheless, these individuals are by no means representative of the elite of Shīʿah academia, nor should we attribute their heterodoxies to the Shīʿah school of thought in general.

We can divide the Shīʿah academic community into two categories. The first category comprises of *muḥaqqiqūn* or research scholars, whereas, the second consists of *muḥaddithūn* or narrators of tradition.[2] As far as the research scholars are concerned, they have always, unanimously, renounced the

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1. ***Kitāb al-Irshād***, pg. 365.

2. The difference between *muḥaqqiqūn* and *muḥaddithūn* was that the first group believed in the permissibility of employing intellectual evidence when deriving religious law, and therefore saw the usage of the intellect admissible in matters pertaining to religion. The second group, however, extracts everything, from the fundamental tenets of faith to the most periphery of religious laws, exclusively from narrated traditions, believing it forbidden for scholars to transgress upon these narrated texts. Here it is noteworthy that while relying exclusively on narrated traditions, the *muḥaddithūn* adhere to very stringent standards in ascertaining the veracity of these narratives. Their work, in this respect, is cleansed of even the slightest shade of negligence. The *muḥaqqiqūn* on the other hand deem themselves free to engage in intellectual activity with regards to religious matters and, unlike the *muḥaddithūn*, seek continuous support from logical and cognitive principles so as to better comprehend the Qur'ān and narrated traditions. Their approach allows them to understand these fundamental sources in a more liberal manner, whereas the *muḥaddithūn* are restricted to the literal meanings of these said texts.

possibility of any such corruption. The narrators, from the time of *ra'īs al-muḥaddithīn* Abū-Jaʿfar al-Ṣadūq until the era of *khātam al-muḥadithīn* Shaykh al-Ḥurr al-ʿĀmilī and al-Muḥaddith al-Kāshānī, have stood shoulder to shoulder with the researchers in denouncing any claim of textual deviation within Qur'ānic text. The only group to rise in support of possible deviation within the Qur'ān's text is the one that came into existence in the 11th century and occupied a place within Shīʿah academia left empty by the *muḥaddithīn*. The adherents of this group were called *akhbāriyyah*, and their views represent a marginal heterodoxy within Shīʿah thinking. Therefore, any attribution of their extremist opinions to Shīʿah scholars, in general, would be entirely unjustified.

Following are select citations, from the writings of various senior Shīʿah scholars, corroborating our proposition in relation to this issue:

Shaykh al-Muḥaddithīn Abū-Jaʿfar Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī ibn al-Ḥusayn ibn Bābawayh al-Ṣadūq (deceased 381 A.H.), in a treatise named *Risālat al-Iʿtiqādāt* writes, "Our solemn belief is that the Qur'ān present amongst the people today is the very same Qur'ān as the one revealed by God to His Prophet (ṣ). It has one hundred and fourteen chapters, nothing less and nothing more. Anyone claiming that we believe the Qur'ān to be larger than this is indeed a liar."[1]

2. ʿAmīd al-Ṭā'ifah Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad ibn al-Nuʿmān, better known by his title Shaykh al-Mufīd (deceased 413 A.H.), has authored, along with many other valuable works, an important book called *Awā'il al-Maqālāt.* In it he writes, "There are people, from amongst the followers of Imamate, who believe that nothing has ever been deleted from the Holy Qur'ān, except that which was present in Imam ʿAlī's codex in terms of explanation and exegesis. They reject any and all forms of reduction from the divine text, be it even a single word." Herein, he continues, "This opinion is far closer to reality, in our view, than the opinion of those who proclaim that some parts of the original Qur'ān have been lost. As far as additions are concerned, no such occurrence has ever taken place and the scholars are unanimous with regard to this issue. In fact, any proposed addition would run contrary to our belief about the miraculous nature of the Holy Qur'ān. From here we conclude that no addition to Qur'ānic text is possible and, as a result, the Holy Qur'ān has remained safe from any such increments. Apart from the argument presented above, we also have at our disposal a tradition narrated from Imam al-Ṣādiq (ʿa) with regard to this issue."[2]

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1. Shaykh al-Ṣadūq's ***al-Iʿtiqādāt*** and ***Sharḥ al-Bāb al-Ḥādī-ʿashar***, pg. 93-94.
2. ***Awā'il al-Maqālāt,*** pg. 54-56.

3. ʿAlam al-Hudā Sayyid Murtaḍā ʿAlī ibn al-Ḥusayn (deceased 436 A.H.); in response to the first issue addressed within the treatise called *Risālat al-Ṭarābulsiyyāt*, he writes, "Definitive certitude with regard to the narrative veracity of the Holy Qur'ān is similar to the certitude we have about our knowledge of great cities, significant historic events, renowned historical books and their authors, and famous pieces of poetry created by celebrated poets of the past. In fact, when compared to these instances, the attention, protection and care enjoyed by the Holy Qur'ān has always been exceptionally greater."

4. Shaykh al-Ṭā'ifah Abū-Jaʿfar Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan al-Ṭūsī (deceased 460 A.H.), in his praiseworthy exegesis of the Holy Qur'ān called *Tafsīr al-Tibyān*, writes, "The possibility of any increment with regard to the Holy Qur'ān is totally inadmissible, because there exists a clear consensus within the Muslim nation with respect to this issue. As for possible reduction, the evident opinion of an overwhelming majority of Muslims stands in negation of any such likelihood. The view of our school of thought is also the same, and dictates that no addition or reduction has ever come to pass with reference to the Qur'ānic text. Sayyid al-Murtaḍā's writings, as well as the apparent meanings of many traditions narrated from the Ahl al-Bayt, lead us to the same conclusion."[1]

5. Jamāl al-Dīn Abū-Manṣūr al-Ḥasan ibn Yūsuf ibn al-Muṭahhar, known as ʿAllāmah al-Ḥillī (deceased 726 A.H.), in his book *Ajwibat al-Masā'il al-Muhannāwiyyah*, says, "The truth is that no instance of replacement or inversion of order has ever taken place within the Holy Qur'ān. Similarly, the divine book has never experienced any addition or reduction to its text. I seek refuge with God from one who insinuates such a matter with reference to the Holy Qur'ān. Any such belief would be tantamount to ridiculing the Qur'ān's miraculous nature, and would effectively call into question the very foundation of the Prophet's divine mission."[2]

From here onwards, for the sake of brevity, we shall refrain from quoting whole excerpts. Instead, we shall suffice by simply listing the names of relevant scholars along with necessary references.[3]

6. ʿAllāmah Abū-ʿAlī al-Faḍl ibn al-Ḥasan al-Ṭabarsī (deceased 548 A.H.); *Majmaʿ al-Bayān*, vol. 1, pg. 15.

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1. *Tafsīr* ***Al-Tibyān***, vol. 1, Introduction, pg. 3.
2. ***Ajwibat al-Masā'il al-Muhannāwiyyah,*** pg. 121, Issue 13.
3. The detailed opinions of each of these scholars have been incorporated into the book ***Ṣiyānat al-Qur'ān min al-Taḥrīf***. This book is written by the same author as that of this present text.

7. Al-Muḥaqqiq al-Ardabīlī (deceased 993 A.H.); *Majmaʿ al-Fā'idah*, vol. 2, pg. 218.

8. Shaykh Jaʿfar Kāshif al-Ghiṭā' (deceased 1228 A.H.); *Kashf al-Ghiṭā'* and *Risālat al-Ḥaqq al-Mubīn*, pg. 11.

8. Shaykh Muḥammad Ḥusayn Āl-Kāshif al-Ghiṭā' (deceased 1373 A.H.); *Aṣl al-Shīʿah wa-Uṣūluhā*, pg. 133.

9. Al-Fayḍ al-Kāshānī Muḥammad Muḥsin (deceased 1090 A.H.); The sixth preface to *Tafsīr al-Ṣāfī* and *ʿIlm al-Yaqīn*, vol. 1, pg. 565 and vol. 2, pg 273-274.

10. Khātam al-Muḥaddithīn Shaykh al-Ḥurr al-ʿĀmilī, author of *Wasā'il al-Shīʿah*, (deceased 1103 A.H.); in his Persian language treatise written specifically upon this topic. The text of this treatise is available within the book *Iẓhār al-Ḥaqq* by Shaykh Raḥmatullāh Dehlawī (vol. 2, pg. 208) and the book *al-Fuṣūl al-Muhimmah* by Sayyid Sharaf al-Dīn (pg. 166).

11. ʿAllāmah Shaykh Muḥammad Jawād al-Balāghī (deceased 1353 A.H.); *'Ālā' al-Raḥmān*, vol. 1, pg. 25-27.

12. Al-Muḥaqqiq al-Thānī Shaykh ʿAlī ibn ʿAbd al-ʿĀlī al-Karakī (deceased 940 A.H.); in a treatise specifically written upon this issue. The text of this manuscript can be found within the book *Sharḥ al-Wāfiyah* by Sayyid Muḥsin al-Aʿrajī.

13. Sayyid Sharaf al-Dīn al-ʿĀmilī (deceased 1381 A.H.); *al-Fuṣūl al-Muhimmah*, pg. 163. The issue has also been addressed in the author's rebuttals written in response to Mūsā Jārullāh, pg. 28.

14. Sayyid Muḥsin al-Amīn al-ʿĀmilī (deceased 1371 A.H.); *Aʿyān al-Shīʿah*, vol. 1, pg. 41.

15. ʿAllāmah al-Amīnī Shaykh ʿAbd al-Ḥusayn al-Tabrīzī; *al-Ghadīr*, vol. 3, pg. 101.

16. ʿAllāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī (deceased 1402 A.H.); *Tafsir al-Mīzān*, vol. 12, pg. 106-137.

17. Imām Khomeini; *Tahdhīb al-Uṣūl*, vol. 2, pg. 165. The issue is also addressed in the exposition written by the same author upon the book *Kifāyat al-Uṣūl*.

18. Ayatollah Sayyid Abū'l-Qāsim al-Khū'ī; in the preface of his exegesis upon the Qur'ān called *al-Bayān*, pg. 215-254.

Denouncement of the Accusation

Many scholars of the Ahl al-Sunnah, upon properly examining the evidence available with regard to the issue of textual corruption within the Qur'ānic text, have denounced the allegations made by some individuals against the *Shīʿah* school of Islamic thought.

The first of such persons was Abū'l-Ḥasan ʿAlī ibn Ismāʿīl al-Ashʿarī (deceased 324 A.H.), the leader and founder of the Ashʿariyyah school of Islamic theology which is followed by most Sunni Muslims today. He writes, "The Shīʿah can be divided into two groups. The first are narrow-minded literalists, devoid of sound reasoning and firm intellectual thoughts in religious matters. They believe that reductions have taken place in the Holy Qur'ān. As proof, they present certain traditions that are empty of value even amongst researchers belonging to their own school of thought. However, we find the same group opposing any possibility of additions to the Qur'ānic text. In this respect they declare, 'Never has any sort of addition taken place within the Holy Qur'ān'. The second group consists of researchers and noteworthy jurisprudents. They reject the possibility of additions, as well as reductions, with reference to the Qur'ān's text. They firmly proclaim, 'The Holy Qur'ān remains today as it was when God revealed it to the Holy Prophet (ṣ). It has remained absolutely safe from all sorts of corruption. No additions, reductions, change or alteration has ever taken place in its text."[1]

ʿAllāmah Shaykh Raḥmatullāh al-Hindī al-Dehlawī, in his praiseworthy book *Iẓhār al-Ḥaqq*, [2] presents a detailed refutation of accusations made against the Shīʿah school of Islamic thought. We have cited the totality of his discussion in our other book called *Ṣiyānat al-Qur'ān min al-Taḥrīf*. Similarly, the contemporary scholar, Muḥammad ʿAbdullāh Darrāz, in his commendable book *Madkhal ilā al-Qur'ān al-Karīm*,[3] defends the Shīʿah school against these baseless accusations.[4] Another such example is Shaykh Muḥammad Muḥammad al-Madanī, head of the faculty of theology at al-Azhar University, who vehemently defends the Shīʿah in the academic journal *Risālat al-Islām*, and declares all such accusations as inhuman acts of prejudicial tyranny.[5]

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1. Refer to: Ashʿarī al-, Abū'l-Ḥasan ʿAlī ibn Ismāʿīl, ***Maqālāt al-Islāmiyyīn***, vol. 1, pg. 119-120; ***Ṣiyānat al-Qur'ān min al-Taḥrīf***, pg. 70-81.
2. ***Iẓhā al-Ḥaqq***, vol. 2, pg. 206-209.
3. ***Madkhal ilā al-Qur'ān al-Karīm***, pg. 39-40.
4. ***Risālat al-Islām***; No. 44, pg. 382-385.
5. Refer to: ***Ṣiyānat al-Qur'ān min al-Taḥrīf***.

The Origin of Claims Regarding Textual Corruption

Select traditions, present in both Sunni and Shīʿah books, form the source of all claims regarding textual corruption within the Holy Qur'ān. Their apparently indicate that the Holy Qur'ān has undergone textual deviation and distortion. As a result, Sunni and Shīʿah scholars and researchers have long battled with these narratives. In terms of transmittance, their narrative chains are dubious at best, and in terms of content, they are characteristically vague and interpretable in different ways. In books related to theoretical jurisprudence and doctrinal theology, such traditions are openly rejected and deemed empty of any academic worth.

In the introduction to his exegesis upon the Holy Qur'ān called *'Ālā' al-Raḥmān*, ʿAllāmah Shaykh Muḥammad Jawād al-Balāghī says:

"From amongst all the traditions quoted by al-Nūrī, with respect to this subject, a large number of narratives are clearly inadmissible. Some openly contradict one another, while others possess conflicting contents. Furthermore, a majority of these traditions bear narrative chains, which originate from individuals identified by scholars as weak narrators. These persons are known for their deviant beliefs and are infamous for their malevolent insistence in transmitting distorted pieces of information. Some of these individual are even famous for dishonesty and deceitfulness. The traditions narrated by such men are obviously unacceptable. Yet another group, from amongst these transmitters, is known to have opposed the immaculate Imams (ʿa). Even if other data was not available, all these characteristics would form sufficient evidence for us to reject any narration transmitted by these persons."[1]

Having analyzed all such traditions from Sunni and Shīʿah sources, the author of this present book concludes that a majority of them are forgeries fabricated by the enemies of religion. It is easily noticeable that these narratives are not directly related to the issue of textual corruption, but have been designed to target the veracity and authenticity of religion itself. In that which follows, we shall present a few of these fabricated texts.

Traditions from the Ahl al-Sunnah

A group from amongst the Ahl al-Sunnah exclusively engaged themselves in collecting traditions. While doing so, they paid little or no attention to the contents of what they collected and concentrated simply on collecting as many traditions as possible. In short, their efforts were directed towards quantity rather than quality. For this very reason, we find that the traditions

1. ***'Ālā' al-Raḥmān***, vol. 1, pg. 25.

collected by them are, in reality, a mixture of authentic and questionable narrations. In fact, some of the traditions recorded by them are nothing but utter absurdities. In the past, this group was popularly known as the Ḥashawiyyah, but today they are called the Salafiyyūn.[1] Similarly, there exists a group amongst the Shīʿah, known as the Akhbāriyyah, greatly resembling them in terms of the traits mentioned above. Most of the traditions, speaking of textual corruption within the Holy Qur'ān, have indeed been collected, compiled and recorded into Sunni and Shīʿah books by members of these two groups. Their heterodoxies do not represent the ideas held by mainstream Sunni and Shīʿah scholars and researchers.

Let us analyze some of the traditions collected by these individuals.

1. Verse of *Rajm* or Lapidating:

The Holy Qur'ān has not spoken of lapidating but has only mentioned flogging as a penalty for adultery. Lapidation, or stoning, is a punishment prescribed within the traditions of the Holy Prophet (ṣ), and is applicable only in special circumstances.[2] Within the framework of these said circumstances, the penalty of lapidating itself enjoys universal and unanimous acceptance amongst Islamic scholars. However, ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb believed that a verse indicating this very punishment had existed within the Holy Qur'ān, but was later left out during the Holy Book's compilation. Throughout his life, ʿUmar continuously tried to convince the companions about the existence of such a verse. He made this claim repeatedly during the compilation of the Holy Qur'ān carried out by Zayd ibn Thābit. According to him, the contents of this supposed verse were as follows:

الشَّيْخُ وَالشَّيْخَةُ إِذَا زَنَيَا فَارْجُمُوهُمَا الْبَتَّةَ نَكَالاً مِنَ اللهِ وَاللهُ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ

"Stone the old man and the old woman who commit adultery. This is a requital from God, and God is Mighty, Wise."

Following the standard procedure adopted by the committee responsible for

1. *Salafiyyūn* are those who consider themselves the followers of the *salaf* (the early predecessors). They believe that the life of a true Muslim must be based upon any and all narrations transmitted from these early predecessors, regardless of whether such narrations are true or false. They deny themselves the right to do research about the veracity of these transmitted texts, and similarly, deem it forbidden for others to engage in any such investigation. Today, this group comprises a part of the larger denomination known as the *Wahhābiyyūn or Wahhābiyyah.*

2. Lapidation is a penalty, in Islamic law, for adultery committed by an individual who possesses access to permissible sexual activity.

compiling Qur'ānic verses, ʿUmar was asked to present two witnesses in corroboration of his claim. Failing to furnish the necessary testimonials, the committee in charge of the said matter turned down ʿUmar's request despite his unrelenting insistence. Nevertheless, he incessantly utilized every available opportunity to articulate his beliefs about this particular matter. Even in his last days he spoke to the people from the pulpit and declared, "Do not say, on the day of judgment, that ʿUmar refrained from informing you about this issue. Oh God, be my witness that I did surely tell them (of this matter), but they rejected what I said."[1]

Apparently, ʿUmar mistook one of the Holy Prophet's traditions for a Qur'ānic verse. Zayd ibn Thābit says, "I heard the Holy Prophet (ṣ) say that if an old man and an old woman commit adultery then their penalty is lapidating." It is possible that ʿUmar heard the same prophetic tradition but misunderstood it to be a Qur'ānic verse.

2. Verse of *Raghbah* or Proximity

ʿUmar also believed that a verse by this name existed in the Holy Qur'ān but was later omitted. He is quoted to have said, "One of the verses I used to recite from the Holy Qur'ān was this:

اَنْ لاَ تَرْغَبُوا عَنْ آبَائِكُم فَإِنَّهُ كُفْرٌ بِكُمْ اَنْ تَرْغَبُوا عَنْ آبَائِكُمْ

"Do not denounce the proximity that you have with your fathers (by claiming that you have descended from individuals other than them); surely it is heresy that you denounce your ancestors"[2]

Once again, the statement in question probably represents a prophetic tradition heard by ʿUmar, who apparently mistook it to be a Qur'ānic verse.

3. Verse of *Jihād* or Holy War

Another such instance is that of this supposed verse, which ʿUmar held to be a part of the Holy Qur'ān.

أَنْ جَاهِدُوا كَمَا جَاهَدْتُمْ أَوَّلَ مَرَّةٍ

"That you fight, like when you fought for the first time."[3]

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1. Refer to: ***Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī***, vol. 8, pg. 208-211; ***Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim***, vol.4, pg.167, vol.5, pg.116; ***Musnad Aḥmad***, vol.1, pg.23, vol.5, pg.132 & 183. Similarly, the said tradition is cited by Abū-Dāwūd, al-Tirmidhī, Ibn Mājah, al-Dārimī, and Mālik's ***al-Muwaṭṭa'.*** In fact, the said narrative is quoted within all the books of Prophetic traditions considered *as Ṣaḥīḥ* by the Sunni school of Islamic thought.
2. ***Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī***, vol.8, pg.208-211; ***Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim***, vol.4, pg.167, vol.5, pg.116.
3. ***Al-Durr al-Manthūr***, vol. 1, pg. 106.

ʿUmar believed that this statement was later deleted from the Holy Qur'ān.

4. Verse of *Firāsh* or Bed

Once again, ʿUmar believed the following statement to be a Qur'ānic verse. This statement is known to be a prophetic tradition transmitted by several narrators.

الْوَلَدُ لِلْفِرَاشِ وَلِلْعَاهِرِ الْحَجَرُ

"The child (begotten of sexual union) belongs to the owner of the bed (i.e. the legally wed husband), whereas the adulterer has no claim on anything."[1]

5. The Number of Letters in the Holy Qur'ān

Another of ʿUmar's beliefs was that the Holy Qur'ān contained 1,027,000 letters, whereas the total number of letters in the Holy Book does not exceed 323,671 alphabets. He is narrated to have said, "The Qur'ān consists of a thousand thousand letters plus twenty seven thousand letters. Whoever recites the Qur'ān for the sake of God, with patience and fortitude, shall be rewarded a dark-eyed Paradisiacal woman for every alphabet he utters."[2] Al-Dhahabī writes, "The only transmitter of this tenuous narrative is Muḥammad ibn ʿUbayd, a person not considered trustworthy by us."[3]

6. ʿUmar's son, ʿAbdullāh, believed that many of the Holy Qur'ān's verses had been lost. He used to say, "Do not claim that you have learnt the whole Qur'ān, for how do you know what the whole Qur'ān is? In reality, a large portion of the Holy Qur'ān has been lost to us. Therefore, it is better for you to say that you have learnt what was available to you of the Holy Qur'ān."[4]

7. Some believe that a portion of the Holy Qur'ān became lost after the Battle of al-Yamāmah (which took place during the early years of Abū-Bakr's reign). This is because a large number of Qur'ānic memorizers were killed during this campaign. After their demise, it was not possible to establish what amount of verses they had taken with themselves to their graves. Consequently, these supposed verses, which were unknown to other companions, were not recorded in the codices produced later on. Ibn Abi'l-Ḥadīd has quoted this opinion, citing it from Ibn Shihāb.[5]

8. In the codex chosen by ʿĀ'ishah for herself, there existed an additional

1. Refer to: ***Al-Durr al-Manthūr***, vol. 1, pg. 106; ***Fatḥ al-Bārī***, vol. 12, pg. 127; ***Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr***, vol. 3, pg. 261; ***Al-Burhān***, vol. 2, pg. 36-37.
2. ***Al-Itqān***, vol. 1, pg. 198.
3. ***Mīzān al-Iʿtidāl***, vol. 3, pg. 639.
4. ***Al-Itqān***, vol. 3, pg. 72.
5. ***Muntakhab Kanz al-ʿUmmāl*** in the margin of ***Musnad Aḥmad***, vol. 2, pg. 50.

amount of text not present in any other codex of the Holy Qur'ān. This text was as follows:

إِنَّ اللهَ وَمَلاَئِكَتَهُ يُصَلُّونَ عَلَى النَّبِيِّ يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا صَلُّوا عَلَيْهِ وَسَلِّمُوا تَسْلِيماً وعلى الذين يصلون الصفوف الاولى

"Surely God and His angels send their blessing upon the Prophet (ṣ). O' you who believe, send blessings upon him, and salute him with a (becoming) salutation**.** And upon those who pray within the first rows."

Ḥamīdah, ʿĀ'ishah's household assistant and the daughter of Ibn Yūnus, remarks, "This additional text remained in place until ʿUthmān changed the codices."[1]

9. ʿĀ'ishah believed that the Holy Qur'ān contained verses related to the amount of breastfeeding that constitutes the creation of a foster relationship. She argues that after the demise of the Holy Prophet (ṣ), while the people were busy preparing for his burial, a goat entered into her room and ate the pieces of parchment upon which these verses had been inscribed. The beginning of one of these supposed verses was as follows:

عَشْرُ رَضَعَاتٍ يُحَرِّمْنَ

"Breastfeeding ten times, renders them foster mothers."

She continues by claiming that this verse was abrogated by the following statement:

خَمْسُ رَضَعَاتٍ يُحَرِّمْنَ

"Breastfeeding five times, renders them foster mothers."

She says, "When the Holy Prophet (ṣ) passed away, these two verses were still recited as parts of the Holy Qur'ān."[2]

10. Abū-Mūsā al-Ashʿarī was of the opinion that there existed in the Holy Qur'ān a chapter equal to Sūrah al-Tawbah, but this chapter was later omitted and subsequently lost. Similarly, he believed that the Holy Qur'ān contained a chapter equal to the group of Qur'ānic chapters called *al-Musabbiḥāt*, and that this second chapter was also lost. He comments, "Right now I remember only one verse of the chapter that was equal to Sūrah al-Tawbah. This verse is:

1. ***Al-Itqān***, vol. 3, pg. 73.
2. ***Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim***, vol. 4, pg. 167; ***Sunan al-Dārimī***, vol. 2, pg. 157; ***Sunan Abī-Dāwūd***, vol. 1, pg. 224.

لَوْ كَانَ لاِبْنِ آدَمَ وَادِيَانِ مِنْ مَالٍ لاَبْتَغَى وَادِياً ثَالِثاً وَلاَ يَمْلأُ جَوْفَ ابْنِ آدَمَ اِلاَّ التُّرَابُ

"If the children of Adam had for themselves two valleys full of riches, they would surely still yearn for a third one. And nothing can fill the emptiness (and hunger) of Adam's children except the earth (when it is poured down upon them in their graves)"

Apparent, Abū-Mūsā mistook this prophetic tradition to be a Qur'ānic verse. Similarly, we find him saying this sentence, "From the other lost chapter, the one equivalent to the *Musabbiḥāt*, I remember this verse:

يَا اَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لِمَ تَقُولُونَ مَا لاَ تَفْعَلُونَ فَتُكْتَبُ شَهَادَةً فِي اَعْنَاقِكُمْ فَتُسْأَلُونَ عَنْهَا يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ

"O' you who believe, why do you utter that which you do not act upon yourselves, for it will be written as proof upon your necks, and you shall be questioned with regard to it on the Day of Judgment."[1]

This statement is also a prophetic tradition, with just one difference. Its meanings are divine, while only the words are that of the Holy Prophet (ṣ). Such a tradition is called Ḥadīth Qudsī. In this case, similar to the one presented above, Abū-Mūsā again falls victim to confusion, and mistakes a prophetic tradition for a Qur'ānic verse.[2]

11. It has been attributed to Ubayy Ibn Kaʿb that he said, "Sūrah al-Aḥzāb, which currently comprises of 73 verses, was originally equal to Sūrah al-Baqarah with 286 verses in total." A similar statement has also been attributed to ʿĀ'ishah. Supposing that she did say such a thing, it might have been for the purpose of rallying the people against ʿUthmān.[3]

12. Mālik ibn Anas believed that a portion of Sūrah al-Tawbah, representing two thirds of the chapter's text, had in fact been lost; and that which remained represented merely one fourth of the original chapter. He says, "This chapter was equal to Sūrah al-Baqarah, but a significant portion from the beginning of this chapter was lost. The verse: *In the name of Allah, Most Beneficent, Most Merciful*, was also part of these lost verses." Many traditions have been narrated with regard to this subject. However, all of them bear little purpose except for making evident the intellectual mediocrity of Mālik's mind.[4]

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1. ***Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim***, vol. 3, pg. 120.
2. Refer to: ***Musnad Aḥmad***, vol. 5, pg. 219.
3. ***Musnad Aḥmad***, vol. 5, pg. 132; ***al-Itqān***, vol. 2, pg. 72; ***Ṣiyānat al-Qur'ān min al-Taḥrīf***", pg. 170-171.
4. ***Al-Itqān***, vol. 1, pg. 184; ***Al-Mustadrak***, vol. 2, pg. 330-331; ***Al-Durr al-Manthūr***, vol. 3, pg. 209.

The Calamity Caused by the Book Al-Furqān

One of the unfortunate effects caused by traditions such as those listed above, is that certain individuals actually took them to be true. Therefore, they concluded that textual corruption had indeed taken place within the Holy Qur'ān during the time that passed between the Prophet's demise and the codical unification carried out by ʿUthmān. They came to believe, contrary to fundamental doctrine, that various instances of addition or omission had come into being within the Qur'ānic text.

From amongst the adherents of such divergent views is the author of *al-Futūḥ al-Makkiyyah*, Muḥyī al-Dīn ibn ʿArabī (deceased 638 A.H.). He claimed that the Holy Qur'ān had undergone corruption by deletion. He says, "If it were not for feeble hearted individuals, men of wavering foundations with quivering faith, who deem such wisdom impermissible, I would have made apparent all that which has been left out of the ʿUthmānic codex…."[1]

However, the most painful of such works is the book *al-Furqān*, written by the contemporary Egyptian author Muḥammad Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Laṭīf (popularly known as Ibn al-Khaṭīb). The scholar in question has collected all such incorrect narrations, and has, subsequently, taken them to be authentic simply because they are found in the six principle Sunni books of Prophetic tradition considered authentic by the Ahl al-Sunnah. After its publication, this book prompted great disturbances in Egypt, as the people protested in opposition to it. Finally, the Al-Azhar University had to request the government to take action. The Egyptian government, in turn, decided to recall all copies of the said book, but by this time the text had already reached all parts of the globe. Copies of this infamous book are currently available in the holy city of Qom.

The author of this book believes that in addition to the textual corruption that took place in the Holy Qur'ān before the codical unification carried out by ʿUthmān, the Holy Book also underwent latter day textual distortions. These distortions came about in the era of al-Ḥajjāj ibn Yūsuf when he supposedly made twelve fundamental textual changes within the Holy Qur'ān's text. We have included an excerpt from the book in question to present an example of what the given author says. He writes, "In the story of Noah within Sūrah al-Shuʿarā', in accordance to the ʿUthmānic codex, the phrase من المخرجين[2] existed, whereas, in the story of Lot the phrase من المرجومين[3] was present. Al-

1. As narrated by Shaykh ʿAbd al-Wahhāb al-Shaʿrānī in the book ***al-Kibrīt al-Aḥmar***. The said text was printed within the marginal notes of the book ***al-Yawāqīt wa'l-Jawāhir***, vol. 1, pg. 139.
2. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Shuʿarā' (167).
3. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Shuʿarā' (116).

Ḥajjāj had the position of these two phrases changed and replaced with one another. This distortion persists to this day."[1]

Traditions from the Imāmiyyah School of Islamic Thought

The first Shīʿah author to write a book in favor of textual corruption within the Holy Qur'ān was Sayyid Niʿmatullāh al-Jazā'irī (deceased 1112 A.H.). In his book *Manbaʿ al-Ḥayāt*, the author discusses the subject at hand and seeks to prove the existence of textual distortions with respect to Qur'ānic content. Subsequently, after almost two hundred years, another author named Ḥājī Nūrī (deceased 1320 A.H.) pens a similar book and calls it *Faṣl al-Khiṭāb*. This text is a collection of traditions which presumably speak of the existence of textual perversion within the Holy Qur'ān. However, the traditions compiled in this book are not only devoid of credibility, but a majority of them also fail in providing support for the author's case. We shall discuss a few of the major instances cited by Ḥājī Nūrī in our discourse below.

Ḥājī Nūrī attempts to prove that the late Thiqat al-Islām Muḥammad ibn Yaʿqūb al-Kulaynī (deceased 328 A.H.) was a proponent of textual distortion within the Holy Qur'ān. In support of his claim, he cites traditions quoted by the late al-Kulaynī in his famous book *al-Kāfī*. In fact, Ḥājī Nūrī argues that the said author was so completely convinced about the existence of textual corruption within Qur'ānic text that he dedicated a whole chapter of his book to traditions related to this matter.[2] Herein, we shall quote the complete contents of this chapter, which include a total of six traditions, and shall see whether the assertion made by Ḥājī Nūrī is true or not.

The title given by the late al-Kulaynī to this particular chapter is as follows:

"The chapter pertaining to the fact that only the immaculate Imams have collected the Holy Qur'ān in its fullness, and that only they, have complete knowledge of it."

It is self-evident that the word *collection* in this title refers to a collection that includes the complete exegesis and exposition of the Qur'ānic text. In reality, the later section of this very title explains the correct meaning of its first portion. By declaring that, after the Holy Prophet's demise, only the immaculate Imams held comprehensive knowledge of the Holy Qur'ān, the title, in effect, clarifies what it means by a *complete collection* of the Holy Book.

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1. ***Al-Furqān***, pg. 50-52.
2. ***Faṣl al-Khiṭāb***, Introduction: 3rd, pg. 25.

Henceforth, the honorable author begins narrating traditions which are as follows:

Tradition no. 1:

"Anyone who claims to have collected the Holy Qur'ān, exactly as it had descended, is indeed a liar. Only ʿAlī ibn Abī-Ṭālib (ʿa) and the Imams after him have collected and preserved the Holy Qur'ān exactly in accordance with what God had revealed (upon His Blessed Messenger)."

It is obvious that the phrase "exactly as it had descended" alludes towards a collection inclusive of the exact exegesis and explanation of the Holy Qur'ān as intended by God Himself. This phrase, however, bears no relation to the Qur'ānic text itself. In fact, the Qur'ān collected and compiled by ʿAlī (ʿa) was no different from the Qur'ān available to Muslims in general. The only difference was that it included exegetic notes, contexts of descent and other such expositional notations. After ʿAlī's martyrdom, this codex was inherited by the immaculate Imams, and today, rests in the custody of the final Imam, al-Ḥujjah ibn al-Ḥasan al-ʿAskarī (ʿa). No one has excess of this manuscript. It is from this perspective that we find Imam al-Ṣādiq (ʿa) declaring, "Anyone who claims to have collected the Holy Qur'ān, exactly as it had descended, is indeed a liar. Only ʿAlī ibn Abī-Ṭālib (ʿa) and the Imams after him collected and preserved the Holy Qur'ān exactly in accordance with what God had revealed (upon His Blessed Messenger)." Having understood this, we see that the said tradition has no relevance to the issue of textual distortion.

Tradition no. 2:

"Only God's trusted saints (the Holy Prophet (ṣ) and the immaculate Imams) can claim that they possess the Qur'ān in its totality, a Qur'ān consisting of both the apparent and inner aspects."

Again, it is self-evident that this tradition has nothing to do with textual corruption. In fact, the tradition explains itself and indicates that the phrase "Qur'ān in its totality," refers to Qur'ānic knowledge. This knowledge consists of the Qur'ān's apparent text, as well as its inner meanings (exegesis and exposition). God's holy saints are the divinely appointed guardians of true Qur'ānic exegesis. As such, they are indeed the only group of people possessing the Qur'ān in its totality i.e. the Qur'ān alongside its correct exegesis and explanation.

Tradition no. 3:

"The knowledge of the Qur'ān's exegesis and the knowledge of its laws were bestowed upon us (in their totality)."

Tradition no. 4:

"I know the whole Qur'ān, from the beginning to the end, as if all its contents were in the palm of my hand."

Tradition no. 5:

"I swear by God that we possess the Holy Qur'ān's knowledge in its totality."

Tradition no. 6:

God says in the Qur'ān:

﴿ وَمَنْ عِندَهُۥ عِلْمُ ٱلْكِتَٰبِ ﴾

"And whoever has knowledge of the Book."[1]

In exegesis of this verse, the immaculate Imam (ʿa) said, "We are the people who possess the knowledge of the Book (in its totality). This verse is indicative of us."

As can be clearly seen, the traditions quoted in this chapter are all indicative of the Qur'ān's knowledge, its exegesis and exposition. None of them have any relationship with the issue of textual distortion.

Apart from his discussion related to the book *al-Kāfī*, Ḥājī Nūrī has also quoted another 1,122 traditions in support of his thesis regarding the existence of textual corruption within the Holy Qur'ān. Following in the footsteps of Sayyid al-Jazā'irī, a majority of the traditions cited by Ḥājī Nūrī are from books that lack any sort of academic credibility. In fact, 815 of these 1,122 narratives, used by the author to support his argument, are quotations taken from such dubious sources. We have provided a complete list of these books below.

1. A treatise, written by an unknown author, about fundamental and allegorical Qur'ānic verses.

2. *Al-Saqīfah*, attributed to Sulaym ibn Qays. This book has been a victim of numerous distortions and, therefore, is no longer considered authentic.

3. *Al-Qirā'āt* by Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad al-Sayyārī. The author of this book has long been identified as a person lacking in credibility and, thus, his texts are devoid of academic value.

4. *Tafsīr Abi'l-Jārūd*: The author of this book is one of *ghulāt* or known extremists who attribute ʿAlī (ʿa) with divinity. The said writer was, in fact,

1. The Holy Qur'ān: Sūrah al-Raʿd (13: 43).

cursed by Imam al-Ṣādiq (ʿa).

5. An exegesis of the Holy Qur'ān attributed to ʿAlī ibn Ibrāhīm al-Qummī. This text is not the handiwork of the said author. In reality, it has been a victim of much manipulation and many a malicious distortion.

6. *Al-Istighāthah* by ʿAlī ibn Aḥmad. The said author is famous for his divergent beliefs.

7. *Al-Iḥtijāj* by al-Ṭabarsī. This book is devoid of a narrative chain that may indicate whether it is authentic or not. The author is also an unknown figure.

8. An exegesis attributed to Imam al-Ḥasan al-ʿAskarī (ʿa). This attribution is an utter fabrication and the said book bears no narrative chain in proof of its authenticity.

9. A few other Qur'ānic exegeses, all lacking any credible chains of narration, fail to meet even the most basic academic standards of authenticity. These exegeses include *Tafsīr al-ʿAyyāshī*, *Tafsīr Furāt ibn Ibrāhīm* and *Tafsīr Abū'l-ʿAbbās Mahyār*.

These are the sources referred to by Ḥājī Nūrī, and based upon them he constructs his case in favor of textual corruption within the Holy Qur'ān. Ḥājī Nūrī, himself, was well aware of the baseless nature of these texts. His devotion to such worthless sources shows that his endeavors, in trying to prove his hypothesis, are similar to the frantic efforts of a drowning man who grabs hold of every little piece of floating wood in hope of saving himself from certain demise.

Out of the remaining 307 traditions, all taken from credible sources, 107 are related to recitational issues. These narratives indicate that the immaculate Imams would recite certain portions of the Holy Book in a manner different from what we see today. However, this issue has no relevance to textual corruption since differences between the seven, or fourteen, famous modes of recitation have always existed within Muslim society. No one has ever taken such disparities to be instances of textual distortion within the Holy Qur'ān. The reality is that we do not know why Ḥājī Nūrī allowed himself to make such an obvious blunder.

While trying to incorporate these traditions into his argument, he quotes from the book *Majmaʿ al-Bayān* that ʿAlī (ʿa) used to recite Sūrah al-ʿĀdiyāt in a manner wherein he would pronounce the word *fawasaṭna* (فوسطن) with a germinated *sīn* (س). Similarly, in Sūrah al-Zalzalah, he is quoted to have recited the word *khayran yarah* (خيراً يَره) as *khayran yurah* (خيراً يُره). In another place, in Sūrah al-Ḍuḥā, the Holy Prophet (ṣ) is quoted to have recited the word *ma waddaʿaka* (ما ودّعك) with an alleviated *wāw* (و).

Likewise, the people of al-Madīnah, as well as Imam al-Ṣādiq (ʿa), are narrated to have recited Sūrah al-Shams in a manner wherein they would pronounce the phrase *walā yakhāfu ʿuqbāhā* (ولا يخاف عقباها) with a *yā'* (ي) in the word ʿ*uqbāhā* so that it became ʿ*uqbīhā* (عقبيها). In the same way, famous reciters like Yaʿqūb, al-Kisā'ī and Sahl are quoted to have recited the word *walā yūthiqu* (ولايوثق) in Sūrah al-Fajr as *walā yūthaqu*.

The author goes on to cite many instances of such recitational differences. However, as we have already mentioned, none of these cases have any relevance with the question at hand. If all these cases were proven to be true, they would still have no effect on the author's argument with regard to textual distortion. At the very most, these instances are merely indicative of the existence of interpretational disagreements, amongst Muslim reciters, with regard to the correct pronunciation of Qur'ānic words and phrases.

Having dealt with the above two sets of traditions, presented in vain by the said author so as to substantiate his failing case, we are left with a remainder of 200 other traditions which need analysis. A majority of these remaining traditions are such that they do not indicate the subject matter under consideration. In fact, they deal with a host of other unrelated issues. As an example we present the following tradition narrated by Jābir ibn ʿAbdullāh al-Anṣārī:

The Holy Prophet (ṣ) said to ʿAlī ibn Abī-Ṭālib (ʿa), "O' ʿAlī, the people have been created from many different trees, but you and I have been created from one single tree." Henceforth, the Prophet (ṣ) continued, "God has declared, 'And in the earth there are tracts, side by side…,'" [1] until he reached (a point where the verse said), 'They are watered with one water….'[2]

Ḥājī Nūrī deemed the phrase *until he reached* to be part of the said Qur'ānic verse. He argued that in this tradition we see the Prophet (ṣ) reciting this particular verse using these additional words.[3] This conclusion is of course baseless, because the phrase in question clearly belongs to the narrator of this tradition, Jābir ibn ʿAbdullāh, and not to the Holy Prophet (ṣ).

Another example is the tradition narrated from Imam al-Ṣādiq (ʿa) wherein he says, "During his ritual prayers, after reciting Sūrah al-Ikhlāṣ, my father used to utter these words: 'God, my Lord, is such.'" This phrase represents a recommended supplication articulated after the recitation of the Qur'ānic

1. Sūrah al-Raʿd (13:04).
2. Sūrah al-Raʿd (13:04).
3. ***Faṣl al-Khiṭāb***, pg. 296. As narrated within ***al-Riwāyāt al-Arbaʿīn*** of Abū-Saʿīd al-Nayshābūrī, Tradition no. 31.

chapter in question. In fact, according to some other traditions, repeating this phrase thrice is highly advised. Once again, Ḥājī Nūrī completely misunderstands the tradition under review and, therefore, declares this phrase to be part of Sūrah al-Ikhlāṣ.[1]

Having cancelled out a large portion of the author's body of evidence, we now reach a point where the remaining traditions, at least in their apparent and literal meanings, are indicative of textual distortion. We can divide these remaining traditions into a few basic categories.

1. Exegetic Traditions

Exegetic traditions mentioned by the immaculate Imams in explanation of various Qur'ānic verses. Such explanations were often intermingled with the recitation of the relevant verse. People like Ḥājī Nūrī have understood these exegetic statements to be part of the said Qur'ānic verses. As a result, he has cried foul, declaring that the Qur'ān has undergone textual corruption due to the supposed deletion of these words from the verses in question.[2] We have incorporated, into this discussion, two such traditions as examples of the issue at hand.

Tradition no. 1:

It has been narrated in the book *al-Kāfī* that Imam ʿAlī Amīr al-Mu'minīn (ʿa) recited the following verse as such:

﴿ وَإِذَا تَوَلَّىٰ سَعَىٰ فِي ٱلْأَرْضِ لِيُفْسِدَ فِيهَا وَيُهْلِكَ ٱلْحَرْثَ وَٱلنَّسْلَ ﴾

"And when he turns back, he runs along in the land that he may cause mischief in it and destroy the tilth and the stock..."[3]

Upon reaching this point in the Qur'ānic verse, the Imam (ʿa) remarked:

بِظُلْمِهِ وَسُوءِ سَرِيرَتِهِ

"(His efforts to spread mischief in the land are) due to his ill will and tyrannical nature."

This sentence was an explanation of the verse's subject matter and not part of the verse itself.

Tradition no. 2:

Similarly, it has been narrated that Imam Mūsā ibn Jaʿfar (ʿa) recited the

1. Ibid, pg. 349. As narrated within ***Tafsīr Al-Burhān***, vol. 4, pg. 521-523.
2. Ibid, pg. 275.
3. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Baqarah (2:205).

following Qur'ānic verse:

﴿ أُولَٰئِكَ ٱلَّذِينَ يَعْلَمُ ٱللَّهُ مَا فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ فَأَعْرِضْ عَنْهُمْ ﴾

"Those men,-Allah knows what is in their hearts; so keep clear of them."[1]

Upon reaching this point in the verse, the Imam (ʿa) said:

فَقَدْ سَبَقَتْ عَلَيْهِمْ كَلِمَةُ الشَّقَاءِ

"For surely aberration has overcome them"

Again, this sentence is an exegetic note upon the verse, and is not part of the verse itself.

2. Traditions in which the word "Taḥrīf" (or deviation) has been used

In these traditions the word *deviation* is used to signify instances of semantic distortion and incorrect exegetic interpretation. However, Ḥājī Nūrī claims that the word in question signifies the existence of textual corruption within the Holy Qur'ān.[2]

Tradition no. 1:

It has been narrated that the Holy Prophet (ṣ) said:

يَجِيءُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ ثَلاَثَةٌ يَشْكُونَ: الْمُصْحَفُ وَالْمَسْجِدُ وَالْعِتْرَةُ. يَقُولُ الْمُصْحَفُ: يَا رَبِّ حَرَّفُونِي وَمَزَّقُونِي. وَيَقُولُ الْمَسْجِدُ: يَا رَبِّ عَطَّلُونِي وَضَيَّعُونِي. وَتَقُولُ الْعِتْرَةُ: يَا رَبِّ قَتَلُونَا وَطَرَدُونَا.

> "There shall come three complainants on the Day of Judgment, the codex, the mosque and the progeny (of the Holy Prophet). The codex shall declare, "O' Lord, they deviated me and tore me apart," and the mosque shall declare, "O' Lord, they closed me down and destroyed me," and the progeny shall declare, "O' Lord, they killed us and drove us away."

In some versions of this narrative the word (حرّقوني) is used instead of (حرّفوني). However, if we were to suppose the latter to be correct, the apparent and literal meaning of the word would still signify "semantic deviation." "Textual distortion" is the word's terminological meaning. Apart from this, the tradition also speaks of mosques being closed down, whereas,

1. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Nisā' (4:63).
2. Ibid, pg. 23-34.

in reality, it actually seeks to say that mosques will become devoid of true worshippers. We can use this as proof to corroborate our claim about the word, used herein, in reference to the Holy Qur'ān. In doing so, we would conclude that by *taḥrīf* or deviation, the tradition seeks to indicate semantic and exegetic corruption, and not distortions in the Qur'ān's actual text.

3. Traditions which supposedly indicate the deletion of certain Qur'ānic verses

Tradition no. 1:

In the book *al-Kāfī*, Imam al-Ṣādiq (ʿa) is narrated to have said:

إِنَّ الْقُرْآنَ الَّذِي جَاءَ بِهِ جَبْرَائِيلُ إِلَى مُحَمَّدٍ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ سَبْعَةَ عَشَرَ أَلْف آيَةٍ

> "Indeed, there were seventeen thousand verses in the Qur'ān brought by Jibrā'īl to Muḥammad (May the mercy of God be upon him and his progeny)"

However, in the book *al-Wāfī*, which is a collection of all four principal books of Ḥadīth, we find the same tradition narrated in a different manner. Therein, it says that the Holy Qur'ān consists of seven thousand verses, a number much closer to reality. The author of this second book, the late al-Fayḍ al-Kāshānī, is well known for his meticulous attention to the minutest of details. On the other hand, all copies of the book *al-Kāfī*, available to us today, are not such that they are categorically devoid of errors. Apart from this fact, the chain of transmission possessed by the first version of this tradition is dubious in its credibility. Therefore, the said narrative is practically useless in terms of being presented as evidence in support of a certain proposition.[1]

4. Traditions related to the reappearance of the Last Immaculate Imam (ʿa) and the arrival of a supposedly new Qur'ān

The so called new Qur'ān, mentioned in these traditions, is indicative of a codex wherein the sequence of chapters is different from the codex we have available today. Apart from this, the Qur'ān brought by the Last Imam (ʿa) would also include a complete exegesis of all Qur'ānic verses. Therefore, it is clear that this particular Qur'ān will be no different, in terms of the actual Qur'ānic text, from the Qur'ān that we have in our possession today.

Tradition no. 1:

Shaykh al-Mufīd narrates:

عَنِ البَاقِرِ عَلَيْهِ السَّلاَمُ قَالَ: إِذَا قَامَ قَائِمُ آلِ مُحَمَّدٍ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ وَسَلَّمَ ضَرَبَ فَسَاطِيطَ

1. Refer to ***Ṣiyānat al-Qur'ān min al-Taḥrīf***, pg. 263-267.

لِمَنْ يُعَلِّمُ النَّاسَ الْقُرْآنَ عَلَى مَا أَنْزَلَ اللهُ فَأَصْعَبُ مَا يَكُونُ عَلَى مَنْ حَفِظَهُ الْيَوْمَ لأَنَّهُ يُخَالِفُ فِيهِ التَّأْلِيف.

> "When the Last Immaculate Imam reappears, the Qur'ān shall be taught to the people, but this task will be difficult because the Qur'ān brought by the Imam would differ in its arrangement and sequence from the one already available before him"[1]

5. Traditions related to the Ahl al-Bayt (ʿa), indicating that the Holy Qur'ān speaks of their lofty virtues and high moral status

Tradition no. 1:

Imam al-Ṣādiq (ʿa) is reported to have said:

مَنْ لَمْ يَعْرِفْ أَمْرَنَا مِنَ الْقُرْآنِ لَمْ يَتَنَكَّبِ الْفِتَنَ.

> "Whosoever fails to understand our matter (the vicegerency of the Prophet's progeny) from the Holy Qur'ān, shall not remain safe during tribulations."[2]

Proponents of textual corruption have taken such traditions to mean that there existed in the Holy Qur'ān verses explicitly speaking of the vicegerency of the Prophet's (ṣ) sacred progeny. Subsequently, they argue that all such verses came to be deleted. However, when we examine the tradition in question we find the Imam (ʿa) saying something entirely removed from what this group has come to understand. The Imam (ʿa) is merely inviting all people towards paying greater attention to the Qur'ān's verses and reading them with greater comprehension. If this is done, the issue of vicegerency would become apparent to all who recite the Qur'ān's present text. For example, a keen and just analysis of verse 59 of Sūrah al-Nisā', and many other similar verses of the Holy Qur'ān, would naturally lead an observer towards understanding the essential gravity and exceptional position enjoyed by the issue of vicegerency within Islam. Unfortunately, most opponents have turned a blind eye towards such matters, and will continue to do so in future, due to their unrelenting stubbornness and prejudicial points of view.

Herein, we shall discuss a few of the Qur'ānic instances wherein the Ahl al-Bayt (ʿa) have been praised and their extraordinary position has been emphasized. These are from amongst the instances that opponents have tried

1. ***Kitāb al-Irshād***, pg. 365.
2. ***Tafsīr al-ʿAyyāshī***, vol. 1, pg. 13.

to ignore or conceal. By doing so, we seek to establish that the "deviation" mentioned by the Imams (ʿa), in traditions like the one cited above, is in fact semantic and not textual. In each of these examples the meanings of the said verses have deliberately been distorted so as to obscure the fact that they are, in reality, indicative of the Ahl al-Bayt's (ʿa) superiority within Muslim society.

Instance no. 1:

﴿ ذَٰلِكَ ٱلَّذِى يُبَشِّرُ ٱللَّهُ عِبَادَهُ ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُواْ وَعَمِلُواْ ٱلصَّٰلِحَٰتِ ۗ قُل لَّآ أَسْـَٔلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ أَجْرًا إِلَّا ٱلْمَوَدَّةَ فِى ٱلْقُرْبَىٰ ۗ وَمَن يَقْتَرِفْ حَسَنَةً نَّزِدْ لَهُۥ فِيهَا حُسْنًا ۚ إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ غَفُورٌ شَكُورٌ ﴾

"That is of which Allah gives the good news to His servants, (to) those who believe and do good deeds. Say: I do not ask of you any reward for it but love for my near relatives; and whoever earns good, We give him more of good therein; surely Allah is Forgiving, Grateful."[1]

Muḥammad ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, while explaining this verse in his exegesis of the Holy Qur'ān, seeks to sway it away from the Ahl al-Bayt. He says, "This verse addresses the tribe of Quraysh and calls upon them to remember their kinship with the Holy Prophet (ṣ), so that, as a result of this kinship, they may support the Holy Prophet's mission and protect him against his enemies." In short, the Prophet (ṣ), due to his relationship with the Quraysh, had appealed to them for support, even though they had already rejected his mission beforehand. Al-Ṭabarsī continued where al-Ṭabarī left off and wrote, "The Holy Prophet (ṣ) had relationships with all the Quraysh. Once they had rejected his mission and denied him their allegiances, the Prophet (ṣ) appealed to them saying, 'Now that you have denied me your loyalties and have rejected my prophethood, at least support me for the sake of my kinship with you, lest other tribes come to my aid instead of you." After stating this, al-Ṭabarsī goes on to list a few other possibilities of what this particular verse seeks to convey. These are as follows:

1. An appeal, asking the people to love the Ahl al-Bayt (ʿa).
2. An appeal, asking the people to seek proximity with God.
3. An appeal, asking the people to love their own relatives.

After listing these possibilities, he goes on to argue in favor of his original choice wherein the Prophet (ṣ) had supposedly sought support from the Quraysh. He does this by trying to refute the other three possibilities

1. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Shūrā (42:23).

mentioned above. He says, "If this verse were to convey the first of these three meanings, the phrase used in it should have been as such: "مودة القربى", whereas the words actually used therein are: "المودة في القربى". Similarly, if the second possibility were true, then the usage should have been like this: "المودة بالقربى", and finally, if the third option were true, the usage should have been: "مودة ذي القربى"."[1]

This exegesis and peculiar perspective is entirely divorced from reality. How is it possible that the Holy Prophet (ṣ) asked the polytheists of Quraysh for support, in terms of it being a payment for his prophetic services, once they had already rejected his claim to prophethood in the first place? This is truly an extraordinary interpretation. They reject the Prophet's (ṣ) divine mission and call him a liar and he, in turn, asks them for their support in lieu of this rejected prophethood because of his kinship with them. The Prophet (ṣ) knew that his most obstinate enemies were people from amongst the Quraysh. Knowing this, a man of exceptional wisdom like the Prophet (ṣ) would never bow down before such a crowd, seeking its protection.

Al-Zamakhsharī, a renowned authority in Arabic grammar, states, "The meaning of the phrase "المودة في القربى" is that the close relatives of the Holy Prophet (ṣ) and the people of his household (the Ahl al-Bayt) are to be placed in a position of love and affection. The Holy Prophet (ṣ) asks the people to act as such, because he himself places these individuals in a highly honored position."[2]

Instance no. 2:

﴿إِنَّمَا وَلِيُّكُمُ ٱللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُۥ وَٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُواْ ٱلَّذِينَ يُقِيمُونَ ٱلصَّلَوٰةَ وَيُؤۡتُونَ ٱلزَّكَوٰةَ وَهُمۡ رَٰكِعُونَ﴾

"Only Allah is your Vali and His Apostle and those who believe, those who keep up prayers and pay the poor-rate while they bow."[3]

Ibn Makhlūf al-Thaʿlabī, in exegesis of this particular verse, has tried to conceal the fact that it descended in praise of Imam ʿAlī ibn Abī-Ṭālib (ʿa). The said verse was revealed when the Imam (ʿa) gave away his ring, in charity, during ritual prayer. Al-Thaʿlabī writes, "This verse is general in nature and includes every charitable worshipper. It is true that the verse's descent coincided with ʿAlī (ʿa) giving away his ring during prayer, but this was merely coincidental. Therefore, ʿAlī's (ʿa) particular act was not the

1. ***Jāmiʿ Al-BayānTafsīr al-Ṭabarī***, vol. 25, pg. 15-17.
2. ***Al-Kashshāf***, vol. 4, pg. 219-220. Refer to: ***Ṣiyānat al-Qur'ān min al-Taḥrīf***, pg. 372-375.
3. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Mā'idah (5:55).

cause of the revelation of this given verse."[1]

Instance no. 3

Sūrah al-Dahr (or al-Insān) is a key instance of God praising the Ahl al-Bayt (ʿa) within the Holy Qur'ān. ʿAbdullāh ibn al-Zubayr always claimed this chapter to be Makkan, so that its connection with the Ahl al-Bayt (ʿa) could be severed.

In short, the Holy Qur'ān is full of verses indicating the special position and extraordinary status enjoyed by the Ahl al-Bayt (ʿa). These instances become apparent whenever the reader exercises his mind towards understanding the Qur'ān in a more complete manner. However, prejudiced individuals are blind of such evident facts.

Imam al-Ṣādiq (ʿa) says,

> "If the Holy Qur'ān were recited in accordance with God's intention, and in the manner revealed by Him, you would always find us alongside the signs mentioned therein." [2]

These traditions, found in Shīʿah books, have been used by proponents of textual corruption in corroboration of their theories with regard to the Holy Qur'ān. As we have shown herein, none of these traditions have any correlation to the question of textual deviation.

1. ***Tafsīr al-Thaʿlabī***, vol. 1, pg. 471.
2. ***Tafsīr al-ʿAyyāshī***, vol. 1, pg. 13.

CHAPTER SIX:
TRANSLATION OF THE HOLY QUR'ĀN

We shall begin our discussion regarding the translation of the Holy Qur'ān with three key questions.

Question 1: Is it possible to translate the Holy Qur'ān into various languages?

We ask this because the Holy Qur'ān is the speech of God Himself and its excellence, eloquence and depth of meaning are all miraculous in nature. Therefore, any translation of this divine text into another language would deprive it of its most fundamental characteristic, simply because it would no longer be the word of God but a text created by man.

Question 2: Supposing that a translation of this book were possible (while accepting the fact that any such effort would automatically lead to the loss of many key features present within the original text) would it be correct for us to call this translated work the "Holy Qur'ān"? Would we be justified in equating these translations to the original revealed text, just like the translated old and new testaments are equated to the original divine scriptures sent down by God upon His two prophets Moses and Jesus?

Question 3: Are the juristic rulings pertinent to such translated texts the same as the religious edicts attached to the Holy Qur'ān itself? For example, is it permissible for a person to recite a translation of Sūrah al-Fātiḥah during ritual prayers, if he were unable to recite the said chapter in the original Arabic language? Similarly, is the prohibition of touching the Holy Qur'ān without ritual purity also applicable to a translation of this divine text?

Serious discussions regarding the translation of the Holy Qur'ān have long been common amongst scholars. In this chapter we shall try to answer the above questions, but before doing so we shall present the reader with a short introduction of different types of translations.

Definition of the Word Tarjamah (or Translation)

The word *tarjamah* (ترجمة) is an infinitive verb in the Arabic language meaning "to make apparent" or "to provide clarity." For this very reason, books comprised of the biographical details of various individuals are often called *tarājim* (the plural form of *tarjamah*), whereas the individual biography of each of these persons is called *tarjamah*.

From the dictionary, we understand that for a translation to come into being there must exist a multiplicity of languages. This is because a translation is the transformation of a text from one language to another, for example a text may be translated from Arabic to Persian.

In the Arabic-Arabic dictionary *al-Muʿjam al-Wasīṭ*, we find the word *tarjamah* defined as such:

"الترجمة نقل الكلام من لغة الى أخرى"

Tarjamah is the transformation of speech from one language to another.

Therefore, if one single meaning were to be presented using two different statements within the same language, the second elaborating upon the first, we would not call this process a translation but rather a mere exposition or explanation. This is because in a translation the original meaning must remain exactly the same, while being presented in a language other than that of the source content. In fact, even the minutest of sensitivities ingrained into the original meaning are to be incorporated into its translated version. Sometimes the apparent and literal meaning of a text is such that this meaning, in itself, is of no real consequence. Rather, it merely forms a vessel containing the real intended meaning, so that the latter may successfully be transferred. Examples of such instances are statements where the internal and real meaning is that of regret or remorse, but the literal meaning does not directly convey the speaker's actual intentions. If such a text were to be translated, the incorporation of this internal and real meaning would be absolutely necessary.

Sometimes, the real meanings of a statement are not conveyed by the words themselves, but rather by their arrangement within the given sentence. For example, there exists a rule in the Arabic language which states: "تقدّم ما حقّه التأخير، يفيد الحصر" (Giving precedence to that which deserved postponement, is indicative of exclusivity). In a statement, where this rule has been applied, the arrangement of individual words would be of critical importance. Therefore, any translation of such a statement would require that this internal meaning, borne of the arrangement of words within the original sentence, be completely integrated into the end product of this translational process.

As a result, a translator must be a person well-versed in both the source and the target languages, so that he may be able to comprehend the hidden internal meanings ciphered into the apparent words of the original text. Subsequently, once understood, he must also be able to transfer these meanings into the translated version of that source content. In short, a translation must be an exact reflection of the actual meaning, without even an iota of change. However, if the sensitivity attached to a text were to

increase in magnitude, as it does whenever the original content is divine or religious in nature, the gravity attached to the task of translating this content will also multiply by the same degree. Based on this principle, any translation of the Holy Qur'ān, because of the miraculous nature of this divine document, shall be a work that demands overwhelming care and painstaking concentration. In fact, many mistakes and oversights found in the various translations of the Holy Qur'ān, available to us today, have come about as a result of the severe difficulty that is inherent to this particular task. Later on, we shall present a few of these errors and shall discuss them briefly.

Translation Methods

If we define a translation as "the transformation of a text from one language to another," then the produced text would naturally occupy the position of being an exegesis, exposition or explanation of the source content being translated. As a result, it would be necessary for the translator to choose a framework within the target language that allows him to transfer the original meaning in its entirety. This task can be accomplished using three different translation methodologies:

1. Literal or verbatim translation
2. Free-Style translation
3. Exegetic translation

1. Literal or Verbatim Translation

This kind of translation is such that the translator simply replaces each word from the original text with a corresponding word from the target language. Subsequently, he replicates this process for all the sentences present in the source document until, finally, he reaches the end of the original content. For example, in translating the phrase "اعوذ بالله من الشيطان الرجيم" the translator produces an end product such as this: "I seek refuge in God from Satan the accursed," or, when translating the sentence "بسم الله الرحمان الرحيم" he comes up with this statement: "In the name of God, the Beneficent, the Merciful." This type of translation is extremely difficult since finding an exact counterpart for every word present in the source language can become very tedious, and sometimes even impossible. In fact, it is because of this very predicament that we find such translations littered with numerous weaknesses and errors. Apart from the utter unavailability of counterpart expressions for many source language words, words that do have counterparts in the target language are also bedraggled with translational problems. Often these counterparts are not entirely suitable and convey only

a shadow of the actual meanings, eroding much of the intrinsic denotations and connotations present in the original text. In addition to these issues, a verbatim translation is also fundamentally incapable of incorporating the aesthetic dimension of a said content into its translated version. Thus, the verbatim methodology is considered the most inarticulate of all translational techniques, and, as a result, is disfavored within academic circles. This is especially true when it comes to translating scholarly texts. If the original sentences are short and simple, verbatim translations may enjoy some degree of success. However, as the length and sophistication of these statements increases, as it always does in academic writings, verbatim translations become more and more incapable of transferring the intended meanings of an author from one language to another.

Based on the short critique presented above, it becomes clear that the verbatim translational technique is, indeed, the most ineffective of the three translational methodologies listed earlier. If this translation approach were to be employed, while translating the Holy Qur'ān, the process would either, become impossible or, yield incredibly ugly results. The Holy Qur'ān is a book that conveys many of its concepts through complex metaphors, intricate similes and symbolic metonymic references. These linguistic elements are always exclusive to a language and, therefore, inherently have no exact counterpart in another language. This fact makes the inadequacy of any verbatim translation of the Holy Qur'ān self evident.

If we were to translate verse 29 of Sūrah al-Isrā' verbatim et literatim, the result would be as follows:

﴿ وَلَا تَجۡعَلۡ يَدَكَ مَغۡلُولَةً إِلَىٰ عُنُقِكَ وَلَا تَبۡسُطۡهَا كُلَّ ٱلۡبَسۡطِ فَتَقۡعُدَ مَلُومٗا مَّحۡسُورٗا ﴾

"And do not make your hand to be shackled to your neck nor stretch it forth to the utmost (limit) of its stretching forth, lest you should (afterwards) sit down blamed, stripped off."[1]

"Never tie your hands upon your neck, nor let them be open, completely open. Then you shall sit reproached and helpless."

Any reader of this translated statement would, naturally be left completely flabbergasted and confused as to why God speaks of binding one's hands to one's neck. In reality, the phrase: "غُلّتْ يده الى عنقه" is a metaphor indicating stinginess, whereas the phrase: "بسط يده" is a metaphor indicating generosity.

1. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Isrā' (17:29).

2. Free-Style Translation

In this translational methodology, the translator seeks to fit the original meaning into a suitable mould within the target language to convey the author's intentions in full. Herein, the translator also tries to keep to the original structure of the text, replacing words and phrases with their nearest counterparts whenever possible. However, if such a possibility were to be non-existent, the translator allows himself the liberty to transgress upon the sequence and structure defined by the source document. As a result, the translator makes minor verbal and sequential changes. Sometimes, he even adds a few words to the text in order to make the actual meaning fully apparent. Such translations are also called "semantic translations," because their focus is primarily on transferring the actual meaning of the source content, whereas a verbal coherence between the source and translated texts is considered secondary in status. In any such translation, as long as the actual meaning remains secure, the translator does not deem himself responsible for preserving the exact verbal perimeter defined by the source document. This is the methodology of choice used in most academic translations. In fact, this technique is the most favorable of all translation methods, for it fully conveys the author's intended meaning. As a result, this type of translation honestly represents a true image of the source text, but in a completely different language.

3. Exegetic Translation

According to this technique, the translator seeks to explain the original text, rather than simply translating it into another language. He elucidates upon the original content and therefore, his translation takes upon itself the colors of a commentary. The only difference being that such a commentary is penned in a language other than that of the source document. Examples include the many exegeses written upon the Holy Qur'ān in non-Arabic languages.

Based on the above dissertation, we conclude that a verbatim translation is entirely undesirable, because such a translation becomes simply impossible when the source content is drawn out or academic in nature. On the other hand, exegetic translations are also quite infeasible, since they transgress upon the limits that all translations must adhere to. The only translation methodology that fits the standards necessary for a translation to be deemed desirable is the free-style technique. Unfortunately, to date most translations of the Holy Qur'ān have either been in accordance to the verbatim technique, or have been in compliance with the exegetic methodology.

Having completed our little detour, discussing the different types of translations, we shall now move back to our actual discussion regarding the

possibility and permissibility of translating the Holy Qur'ān.

Three Key Characteristics of the Holy Qur'ān

The Holy Qur'ān has three fundamental features which are not to be ignored. In fact, the exceptional sacredness of the Holy Qur'ān, which sets it apart from all other heavenly books, is a result of these very characteristics.

The first of these key features is that the entire text of the Holy Qur'ān, every word and letter, is divine speech itself. The contents of this heavenly book are, in their absolute entirety, the handiwork of God and none other. Therefore, its recitation is, in itself, an act of obedience and servitude towards God, leading man to His hallowed proximity.

The second pivotal attribute of the Holy Qur'ān is its universality. It is a book of guidance for all, leading man to the straight path of salvation without fail.

The third critical trait of the Holy Qur'ān is its miraculous nature. It is, in fact, a living miracle of Islam and therefore, stands steadfast as an eternal proof of the veracity and authenticity of God's final message as well as the Prophet (ṣ) sent to convey it.

In reality, it would not be wrong to claim that the Holy Qur'ān's firm foundations are built upon these three characteristics. Keeping this in mind, is it possible for a translator to incorporate these essential attributes into a translation he seeks to prepare for the Holy Qur'ān? Even if a translator were to successfully transfer the semantic dimension of Qur'ānic content into its translated version, would he also be able to transfer the miraculous verbalization that characterizes the word of God? Above all else, would any given translation be able to boast the holiness that personifies the original Qur'ānic text because it is derived from divine speech itself?

It is obvious that a translation of this heavenly book can never fully transfer all the numerous dimensions of its message in a manner so perfectly revealed by God himself. Therefore, any translation of the Holy Qur'ān, no matter how precise or scholarly it may be, can only succeed in conveying a fraction of the divine text's actual reality. Similarly, it is utterly impossible for any given translation to replicate the supernal sanctity of this book, since a translation is mundane and temporal in nature, whereas the actual Qur'ān is divine and celestial down to the last syllable.

Consequently, the jurisprudential opinion of Islamic scholars, especially those belonging to the Shīʿah Imāmiyyah school of thought, is that all religious rulings attached to the actual Qur'ān are not applicable to its translations. However, due to their attribution to the Holy Qur'ān, all

translations and exegeses of the Holy Book deserve a high degree of respect, but this status is not comparable to that enjoyed by the divine manuscript itself.

The late al-Muḥaqqiq al-Hamadānī considered it impermissible for a Muslim to recite Sūrah al-Fātiḥah, during ritual prayers, in any language other than the original Arabic. He stringently adhered to this opinion, even with reference to people who lacked the very ability of reciting the said chapter in Arabic. He based his edict on the fact that any translation, prepared for this purpose, would not be the word of God but a mere construct of the human intellect.[1] Numerous traditions have been narrated from the Holy Prophet (ṣ) and the immaculate Imams with regard to this issue.

قَالَ رَسُولُ اللهِ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ وَسَلَّمَ: تَعَلَّمُوا الْقُرْآنَ بِعَرَبِيَّتِهِ...

"The Messenger of God (May the blessings of God be upon him and his progeny) said: Learn the Qur'ān in Arabic…"

قَالَ الإِمَامُ الصَّادِقُ عَلَيْهِ السَّلاَمُ: تَعَلَّمُوا الْعَرَبِيَّةَ فَإِنَّهَا كَلاَمُ اللهِ الذّي كَلَّمَ بِهِ خَلْقَهُ وَنَطَقَ بِهِ لِلْمَاضِينَ

"Imam al-Ṣādiq (May the blessings of God be upon him) said: Learn Arabic, for surely it is the speech of God with which He talks to His creation and He speaks in it about those who have passed"[2]

Islamic jurisprudents have passed the following edicts with reference to this issue:

1. Anyone unable to recite Sūrah al-Fātiḥah in Arabic must learn to do so.

2. Anyone unable to learn the said chapter in Arabic must recite some other verses or a different chapter instead.

3. Anyone unable to recite the Holy Qur'ān itself (and incapable of learning its recitation), must recite some other Arabic supplication in its place. However, any such supplication must necessarily resemble Sūrah al-Fātiḥah in length.

4. Based on the permissibility of supplicating in languages other than Arabic, a translated content, recited in terms of it being a mere supplication, is deemed acceptable. However, it is better to refrain from such an activity.

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1. Refer to: ***Miṣbāḥ al-Faqīh; Kitāb al-Ṣalāt,*** Issue of Recitation, pg. 273-277.
2. ***Wasā'il al-Shī'ah***, vol. 4, Chapters concerned with Qur'ānic Recitation, Chap. 30, Tradition 1 & 2.

In short, Shīʿah Imāmiyyah jurisprudents are unanimous in prohibiting the recitation of a translation of the Holy Qur'ān during ritual prayers. Similarly, they believe that religious rulings attached to the Holy Qur'ān are inapplicable to its translations.

Founders of the other Islamic schools of thought, except Abū-Ḥanīfah and his followers, agree with the Shīʿah with regard to this issue. However, Abū-Ḥanīfah believed it permissible to use non-Arabic recitations during ritual prayers. In support of his edict, he brought forth the following tradition:

> "It has been narrated that the Holy Prophet (ṣ) allowed Salmān al-Fārisī (the Persian) to teach some Iranians, residing in the Arabian Peninsula, a Persian translation of Sūrah al-Fātiḥah so that they could use this translation during their ritual prayers. This was allowed in order to get the Iranians gradually accustomed to Islamic norms."[1]

Similarly, it has been reported that Ḥabīb al-Aʿjamī, one of the companions of al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, used to recite the Holy Qur'ān in Persian during his ritual prayers because he was unable to do so in Arabic.[2]

Shaykh Muḥammad Bakhīt, the mufti of Egypt, issued an edict allowing the people of Transvaal to recite the Holy Qur'ān's translation during ritual prayers. He deemed action in accordance with this edict permissible only if the concerned people were unable to recite the original Arabic. In support of his ruling, he cites the actions of Ḥabīb al-Aʿjamī as proof and evidence of such permissibility.[3]

The Importance of Translating the Holy Qur'ān

Qur'ānic translations have always been essential tools for conveying the Qur'ān's message to non-Arab nations. Muslim missionaries have always used Qur'ānic translations and exegeses to bring their audiences closer to the Holy Qur'ān. In doing so, they have led these people towards the straight path of salvation and guidance. No Islamic jurisprudent has ever deemed such a usage of Qur'ānic translations to be impermissible. In fact, translating the Holy Qur'ān has historically been a priority for Muslim scholars, and even many non-Muslim academics have engaged themselves in this vital task. It is obvious that every nation should be addressed in its own language, especially when one seeks to transfer to them the eternal and universal message of the Holy Qur'ān. This is especially true since we see the Holy Qur'ān inviting all of humanity towards guidance. Its message is, therefore, not exclusive for the Arab nation. Similarly, non-Arabs should not be forced

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1. Sharkasī al-, Shams al-Dīn, ***al-Mabsūṭ,*** vol. 1, pg. 37.
2. Al-Marāghī, ***Sharḥ al-Mabsūṭ***, pg. 17.
3. Wajdī, Muḥammad Farīd, ***al-Adillah al-ʿIlmiyyah***, pg. 58.

into learning the Arabic language in order to understand the Holy Qur'ān. Although, a comprehension of the Arabic language does remain advantageous for someone interested in studying God's final message.

In present times, Qur'ānic translations and exegeses form some of the finest tools of conveying the Holy Qur'ān's message to people around the world. Nations desire to understand the divine ideology interwoven within the Qur'ānic text. This heavenly message, if correctly transferred to the people of the world, has the potential to unite them against perpetrators of oppression and tyranny, wherever it may exist.

Therefore, it is necessary that the Holy Qur'ān be translated into all living world languages, so that all nations may gain access to its celestial message. However, any such project must be carried out under the supervision of qualified experts.

Arguments Presented by the Opponents of Qur'ānic Translations

Some of the arguments presented in opposition of Qur'ānic translations are as follows:

1. The actual Qur'ān may become lost and forgotten as a result of these translations, very much like the Torah and the Gospel. These two heavenly books have become replaced by their numerous translations, and today no trace exists of their originals.

2. It is natural for discrepancies to appear between various translations. Such disagreements may misguide readers, for they would not be able to distinguish the correct version from the incorrect one.

3. Many verses of the Holy Qur'ān relate profound realities beyond the complete comprehension of human minds. This is especially true regarding verses that speak of ontological issues and human genesis. In such cases, the translator can do little but convey what he personally understands these realities to be. It is obvious that the translator's opinion, based on the nature of these realities as discussed above, represents something different from what God originally intended to convey. The reader, in turn, will also walk away with a comprehension different from what the Holy Qur'ān actually sought to express. Apart from this, such verses will end up getting translated according to human scientific knowledge. This knowledge changes over time as the scope of human scientific experience increases. This continuous change would dictate that the translation of these verses also be changed continuously. It is evident that such a process would lead to these verses having no permanent translation.[1]

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1. Shāṭir al-Miṣrī, Muḥammad Muṣṭafā, ***al-Qawl al-Sadīd fi Ḥukm Tarjamat al-Qur'ān al-Majīd***, pg. 17-18.

In answer to these arguments, we must declare: Gentlemen! Your case is a close example of "parallelism where no analogical parallel exists." The Holy Qur'ān cannot be compared to the old and new testaments, because the very purpose behind translating these two books was to keep the public away from their original texts. By means of keeping the actual manuscripts hidden, church and synagogue leaders sought to force their own exegetic opinions upon Christian and Jewish masses.

The Holy Qur'ān, itself, speaks of this issue. It severely reprimands all individuals seeking to conceal these originally revealed scriptures.

﴿ وَمَا قَدَرُواْ ٱللَّهَ حَقَّ قَدۡرِهِۦٓ إِذۡ قَالُواْ مَآ أَنزَلَ ٱللَّهُ عَلَىٰ بَشَرٖ مِّن شَيۡءٖۗ قُلۡ مَنۡ أَنزَلَ ٱلۡكِتَٰبَ ٱلَّذِي جَآءَ بِهِۦ مُوسَىٰ نُورٗا وَهُدٗى لِّلنَّاسِ تَجۡعَلُونَهُۥ قَرَاطِيسَ تُبۡدُونَهَا وَتُخۡفُونَ كَثِيرٗاۚ وَعُلِّمۡتُم مَّا لَمۡ تَعۡلَمُوٓاْ أَنتُمۡ وَلَآ ءَابَآؤُكُمۡۖ قُلِ ٱللَّهُۖ ثُمَّ ذَرۡهُمۡ فِي خَوۡضِهِمۡ يَلۡعَبُونَ ﴾

"And they do not assign to Allah the attributes due to Him when they say: Allah has not revealed anything to a mortal. Say:' Who revealed the Book which Musa brought, a light and a guidance to men, which you make into scattered writings, which you show little, while you conceal much?' And you were taught what you did not know, (neither) you nor your fathers. Say: Allah. Then leave them sporting in their vain discourses."[1]

On the other hand, Muslim masses enjoy free access to the Holy Qur'ān and this divine manuscript is continuously at their disposal without even the slightest limitation. In fact, ordinary Muslims have formed the vanguard of those defending and supporting the Holy Qur'ān from the very beginnings of Islamic history. Therefore, the Holy Qur'ān was never concealed from public eyes, nor can it be hidden away in the future. These features make the Qur'ān immune to being lost or forgotten, just as they have secured it from all textual manipulations and malicious distortions.

As for the issue related to the emergence of differences in between various translations, we accept that this problem does indeed exist. However, the root of this difficulty is a lack of proper management with reference to translating the Holy Qur'ān. Qur'ānic translation must be carried out by qualified experts, under the guidance of specialists. If this is done, all discrepancies and incoherencies can be taken care of.

1. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Anʿām (6:91).

Apart from the arguments presented above, some opponents of Qur'ānic translations have sought help from certain prophetic traditions that make it obligatory upon Muslims to recite the Qur'ān in Arabic. According to these traditions, Qur'ānic recitation is an act of worship similar to the daily ritual prayer or the *Ḥajj* pilgrimage. Therefore, such a recitation must be carried out using the Qur'ān's original Arabic, regardless of whether the reciter understands this language or not. However, upon close analysis, we see that these traditions fail to indicate a prohibition with regard to translating the Holy Qur'ān. Nevertheless, it is strongly preferable for all Muslims to learn Arabic, so that they become capable of reciting and understanding the Qur'ān directly from its original text.

Edicts of Islamic Scholars

Apart from certain particular instances, the earliest Islamic scholars have not discussed this issue. Nonetheless, these scholars are recorded to have used various translations of Qur'ānic verses, and their relevant exegeses, while communicating with the people and delivering propagative sermons. Some Muslim exegetes, like *Abū'l-Futūḥ al-Rāzī*, have translated the verses of the Holy Qur'ān while elucidating upon their exegeses. However, such translations were not meant for non-Muslim readers.

Today, when the issue of propagation has become international and the Holy Qur'ān, and indeed Islam itself, has become global in its appeal, we are faced with this pivotal question: Should the Holy Qur'ān be translated into foreign languages so that it may become available to foreign nations?

In the middle of the 14th century of Hegira, discussions related to Qur'ānic translations became fervent within Egypt and other Islamic countries. The majority considered this task to be of vital importance, whereas a minority objected to any such translation work being carried out.

In the beginning, the affirmative opinion gained strength within Egypt and as a result, the academic cream of Egyptian scholars, belonging to the historic Al-Azhar University, passed numerous edicts ruling it permissible to translate the Holy Qur'ān. However, in the end the opponents prevailed, and all translation work was suspended.

The Edict of Kāshif al-Ghiṭā

At around the same time, when the influence of this new movement was being felt everywhere, the late Shaykh Muḥammad Ḥusayn Kāshif al-Ghiṭā issued an edict regarding this very issue. This edict was in response to a question raised by ʿAbd al-Raḥīm Muḥammad ʿAlī. Below, we have quoted a brief excerpt from within this religious ruling:

"A translation of the Holy Qur'ān, no matter how precise and eloquent, cannot convey that which has been conveyed by the Qur'ān itself, using the Arabic language. A translation merely achieves a semantic transfer. Such a transfer, in itself, is also quite necessary. A translation, if done properly without (semantic) deletions or additions, is deemed permissible under Islamic law. In fact, for those individuals or groups capable of performing such a task, translating the Holy Qur'ān into other languages is deemed obligatory. We say this because today the propagation of religion depends upon the Qur'ān being translated. Based on this argument, such an effort would personify an instance of the following Qur'ānic verse:

﴿ وَلْتَكُن مِّنكُمْ أُمَّةٌ يَدْعُونَ إِلَى ٱلْخَيْرِ وَيَأْمُرُونَ بِٱلْمَعْرُوفِ وَيَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ ٱلْمُنكَرِ ۚ وَأُوْلَٰٓئِكَ هُمُ ٱلْمُفْلِحُونَ ﴾

"And from among you there should be a party who invite to good and enjoin what is right and forbid the wrong, and these it is that shall be successful."[1]

Indeed what virtue is better than inviting people towards Islam? Translations of the Holy Qur'ān into Persian have always taken place, and the scholars have never objected to this issue. Therefore, if it is permissible to translate the Holy Qur'ān into Persian, then it is also most definitely permissible to translate it into other foreign languages. In reality, there is no need to fall back upon the juristic principles of *aṣālat al-barā'ah*[2] or *aṣālat al-ibāḥah*[3] when dealing with this matter. Truly, this issue is so clear that it requires no additional argumentation, nor do we require juristic principles in order to ascertain the ruling attached to it."[4]

The Opinion of Ayatollah al-Khū'ī

The honorable teacher, Ayatollah al-Khū'ī, adheres to an all comprehensive and crystal clear opinion when faced by this issue. According to him, translating the Holy Qur'ān into other languages represents an absolute necessity without which the effective propagation of religion would practically be impossible. In the book *al-Bayān*, he explains the necessary conditions that a translation must meet in order for it to be acceptable.

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1. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah Āl-ʿImrān (3:104).
2. A juristic principle dictating that, given the unavailability of a clear ruling from God, the Prophet (ṣ) or the immaculate Imams, a Muslim has no duty with regards to a given issue.
3. A juristic principle dictating that all actions are permissible until proven otherwise.
4. Najafī al-, ʿAbd al-Raḥīm Muḥammad ʿAlī; ***Al-Qur'ān wa'l-Tarjamah,*** pg.3-4.

"God sent the Holy Prophet (ṣ) as a guide for all people. He sent His Messenger (ṣ) with the Holy Qur'ān which forms a comprehensive text leading humanity towards excellence and salvation. This divine blessing is not exclusive to any single nation, but for all mankind. However, God desired to send the Holy Qur'ān in a language spoken by the Prophet's kinsmen, even though its meaning and message were universal in nature. Therefore, it is necessary that this universal message be conveyed to all human beings. Without doubt, translating the Holy Qur'ān can help in spreading the Qur'ān's message to all of humanity.

Indeed, any such translation must be done in according to a set of rules. The translator must be an expert in both the source and target languages, because even an otherwise strong translation remains incomplete without proper and eloquent verbalization. Care must be taken so that the intention of the actual text is not reversed. Therefore, a deep understanding of the Holy Qur'ān itself becomes a fundamental necessity for anyone seeking to translate this divine book. This deep comprehension must be built on three crucial elements:

1. The apparent meaning of the text must definitely be catered to. This apparent meaning is the meaning understood by an Arab when he reads the Qur'ānic text, based on his instinctual comprehension of the Arabic language.

2. The human intellect must be used for understanding the higher meanings conveyed by the Holy Qur'ān. These higher meanings are essentially in line with the intellect.

3. One must refer to exegeses made available by the earliest credible sources, especially the immaculate Imams (ʿa). This will help in keeping a translator safe from divergences and misunderstandings.

Thus, a translator should only begin translating the Holy Qur'ān when he has gained a comprehensive understanding of Qur'ānic text and as a result, is able to transfer the divine manuscript's exact meanings into another language. He must not allow his own personal opinions, or other skewed points of view, to interfere with his work. The incorporation of personal opinions is in contradiction to all academic standards. Such an act is considered a form of "exegesis by opinion," which is rejected unanimously by all scholars. If these basic rules are followed, it is possible for a translator to prepare a translation of the Holy Qur'ān that reflects its message clearly and honestly. Such a translation can help in transferring the Qur'ān's divine message to other nations. The Holy Qur'ān has been revealed for all nations and it is abominable to deprive non-Arab people from its contents. The

Qur'ān is for all nations, and all nations have the right to gain benefits from it."[1]

The Letter Written by the Dean of Al-Azhar University to the Prime Minister of Egypt

In an official letter written by him to the Prime Minister of Egypt in the year 1355 A.H., Shaykh Muṣṭafā al-Marāghī (who was dean of Al-Azhar University at that time) commented as follows:

"In the past, as well as in the present, certain groups have taken upon themselves the task of translating the Holy Qur'ān. These individuals are normally experts in their respective native tongues but, when it comes to the Arabic language, they suffer from grave shortcomings. They are commonly unaware of many crucial intricacies within the Arabic language and are similarly uninformed about Islamic terminology. As a result, they fail to comprehend the content they seek to translate. This is the reason behind the many errors found in Qur'ānic translations available to us today. Unfortunately, these flawed translations are the only ones available to the public. The people are left with no other choice but to understand the Holy Qur'ān's teachings using these defective texts. Consequently, they have come to rely upon these translations and have taken them to be trustworthy. Therefore, it is the duty of all Muslims and especially the people of Egypt, in line with the unique position this land enjoys among Muslim states, to act swiftly in order to remove all such defects from Qur'ānic translations. They must do this so that translations devoid of errors and imperfections can be made available to the nations of the world.

If this project were to be taken up seriously, its effects would be widely felt and would certainly help in spreading Islam's message globally. The very foundation of Islamic propagation stands on presenting sound proof and concrete argumentation, and the Holy Qur'ān is full of such irrefutable argumentative proof. If a just and unbiased person were to study the Holy Qur'ān, its sheer logic would overcome him and he would have no choice but to submit to its utter truthfulness…

…Therefore, we strongly recommend that the government take immediate measures to prepare a comprehensive plan for producing Qur'ānic translations. This work must be undertaken officially, utilizing the expertise of the scholars at *Al-Azhar* University, with the government taking care of all necessary funding. We hope that our suggestion will be met by your serious consideration."

1. ***Al-Bayān***; Note no. 5, pg. 540.

There also exists another similar letter sent to the Prime Minister by the Egyptian Ministry of Religious Affairs, in support of the suggestions made by the dean of *Al-Azhar* University.[1]

The Edicts of the Scholars at Al-Azhar University

As a result of the above communications, scholars of the Al-Azhar University were asked to provide detailed guidelines elaborating the necessary conditions required to prepare correct and acceptable Qur'ānic translations. In response to this request, the said scholars provided a comprehensive edict in which the permissibility of translating the Qur'ān was made explicit. Herein, we shall quote the entire contents of the official request along with the reply, given by the Al-Azhar University scholars.

"Respected scholars and men of virtue,

Please provide an answer to the following question after considering the introductory notes provided herein.

1. Undoubtedly the word 'Qur'ān' signifies a particular book, which has for itself a unique sequence and arrangement, and was revealed by God unto the Holy Prophet (ṣ) in the Arabic language. It is also beyond doubt that if this book were to be translated, so as to render it more widely comprehensible, this said translation would not be the Qur'ān itself, but shall indeed be no more than a mere translation. Any such translation will therefore, be similar to a Qur'ānic exegesis, because both are mere explanations of the Holy Qur'ān's actual contents.

2. Likewise, the inherent incapability of a verbatim translation in incorporating within itself all the fine connotative and denotative aspects of Qur'ānic text, especially those created by the text's unique sequence and verbalization, is a matter that needs no further discussion.

3. Deficient and flawed translations of the Holy Qur'ān have been prepared and made available to the people. As a result, individuals unaware of the Arabic language have deemed these translations trustworthy and have taken them to be authentic and accurate. Even non-Muslim scholars, seeking to understand the Holy Qur'ān's message, have had no choice but to refer to these flawed documents.

4. A growing consensus has called out for steps to be taken in order to prepare correct translations of the Holy Qur'ān in various world languages. These correct translations must be based on the following principles:

1. Refer to: Muḥammad Sulaymān, ***Ḥadath all-Aḥdāth,*** pg. 33-35.

It is necessary for the experts at Al-Azhar University to understand the correct meaning of the Qur'ānic text. Then, by referring to the opinions of the earliest scholars and exegetes, this meaning must be prepared into precise and concise statements. Subsequently, these statements must be translated by trustworthy scholars sound in their academic credentials and skills. These conditions are meant to make sure that all translations convey, with the utmost honesty and sincerity, the exact same meaning as that conveyed by the Holy Qur'ān in its original Arabic.

Our question to the respected scholars is this: Would such a task, if performed in accordance with the conditions mentioned above, be permissible under Islamic law or not?

Once again we stress that any such translation is by no means equivalent to the Qur'ān itself, nor does it represent any of the characteristics of the Holy Qur'ān. Similarly, these translations are also not a comprehensive representation of what the respected scholars have come to understand of the Qur'ān. In fact, these translations are to be printed alongside the Qur'ān's actual text, and are not to be published separately…"

Following is the edict issued by the scholars at Al-Azhar University in response to the above query:

> "All praise belongs to God and may His salutations and mercy be upon His Messenger (ṣ). That which has been mentioned in the said written query has come to our attention, and we have come to the conclusion that a translation, in accordance with the said conditions, is permitted under religious law. Indeed God, the Glorified and Sublime, is All-Knowing."

The dean of the Al-Azhar University at that time, Muḥammad Muṣṭafā al-Marāghī, approved the said edict, and added the following statement to it:

"In the name of God, the Beneficent, the Merciful. I have referred this question to the honorable group of senior scholars and I do indeed agree with their opinion."

After the announcement of this verdict by the Al-Azhar University scholars, and the approval it gained from the dean of this university, the Egyptian government began efforts towards preparing translations for the Holy Qur'ān.

Opposition towards Translating the Qur'ān in Egypt

Parallel to the steps taken by the Al-Azhar University scholars, efforts were also being made in order to prevent any translation of the Holy Qur'ān from taking place. These efforts were spearheaded by the senior vice-chairman of the Egyptian court of religious law, Shaykh Muḥammad Sulaymān. This

opposition took serious measures to stop any such translation from coming into existence. They had within their ranks several renowned personalities such as the ex-dean of the al-Azhar University, Shaykh Muḥammad Aḥmadī al-Ẓawāhirī. He was also a member of the assembly of senior scholars, but had remained absent from their meetings, refraining from articulating his views regarding the group's intentions and plans of translating the Holy Qur'ān. In addition, the Shaykh had also written a letter encouraging the ex-Prime Minister of Egypt, ʿAlī Māhir Pasha, to denounce the government's translation project.

This movement organized itself into a resistance, opposing the proposed translation of the Holy Qur'ān. They held regular meetings, issued statements and even arranged a signature campaign, the results of which were sent to the Egyptian parliament. By doing so, they called upon the Egyptian parliamentarians to intervene and prevent the said project from taking place. Finally, by pouring out into the streets, they encouraged ordinary people to protest against the government's measures.

Some of these opposition scholars even issued edicts against the said translation process. One such person was Shaykh Mūsā al-Gharawī, the ex-head of the Egyptian religious courts. Other scholars who issued similar proclamations were also linked to the religious judiciary. Copies of these religious decrees were also sent to the Egyptian parliament.

In the parliament itself, a similar group was formed under the leadership of Shaykh ʿAbbās Jamāl, the state appointed religious defense advocate. Many parliamentarians, joining this group to actively participate in this so-called resistance, campaigned for the cancellation of the budget allocated by the government for this translation process. They even encouraged high-ranking Syrian, Palestinian and Iraqi scholars to write letters to the Egyptian Prime Minister, Naḥḥās Pasha, to convince him into terminating the said project. The content of these letters was saturated with importunate beseeching, and called upon the Prime Minister, while swearing upon all things holy and sacred, to annul the measures taken by the Egyptian government for translating the Holy Qur'ān.

Unfortunately, the opposition's campaign proved to be successful, and the issue of translating the Holy Qur'ān fell into permanent abeyance.

The Prime Minister, Naḥḥās Pasha, tried to resolve the situation, seeking to bring the two sides to a compromise. Nevertheless, in the end an extremely crucial project, that could have been pivotal in propagating Islamic teachings

all over the world, fell prey to the short sightedness of a certain group.[1]

Translating the Qur'ān is a Missionary Duty

Today translating the Qur'ān into various international languages has become an absolute necessity. The reasons are as follows:

1. The Holy Qur'ān is a book that invites mankind towards God. This invitation must be made available to all of humanity.

﴿ شَهْرُ رَمَضَانَ ٱلَّذِىٓ أُنزِلَ فِيهِ ٱلْقُرْءَانُ هُدًى لِّلنَّاسِ وَبَيِّنَٰتٍ مِّنَ ٱلْهُدَىٰ وَٱلْفُرْقَانِ ۚ فَمَن شَهِدَ مِنكُمُ ٱلشَّهْرَ فَلْيَصُمْهُ ۖ وَمَن كَانَ مَرِيضًا أَوْ عَلَىٰ سَفَرٍ فَعِدَّةٌ مِّنْ أَيَّامٍ أُخَرَ ۗ يُرِيدُ ٱللَّهُ بِكُمُ ٱلْيُسْرَ وَلَا يُرِيدُ بِكُمُ ٱلْعُسْرَ وَلِتُكْمِلُوا۟ ٱلْعِدَّةَ وَلِتُكَبِّرُوا۟ ٱللَّهَ عَلَىٰ مَا هَدَىٰكُمْ وَلَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ ﴾

"The month of Ramaḍān is that in which the Qur'ān was revealed, a guidance to men and clear proofs of the guidance and the distinction; therefore whoever of you is present in the month, he shall fast therein, and whoever is sick or upon a journey, then (he shall fast) a (like) number of other days; Allah desires ease for you, and He does not desire for you difficulty, and (He desires) that you should complete the number and that you should exalt the greatness of Allah for His having guided you and that you may give thanks."[2]

﴿ هَٰذَا بَيَانٌ لِّلنَّاسِ وَهُدًى وَمَوْعِظَةٌ لِّلْمُتَّقِينَ ﴾

"This is a clear statement for men, and a guidance and an admonition to those who guard (against evil)." [3]

2. Islam is not exclusive to a particular people, but rather it is an all-inclusive religion sent by God for all of humanity. Therefore, it grants all nations the right to enter into its folds, shunning racial or national prejudices.

﴿وَمَآ أَرْسَلْنَٰكَ إِلَّا كَآفَّةً لِّلنَّاسِ بَشِيرًا وَنَذِيرًا وَلَٰكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ ٱلنَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ﴾

"And We have not sent you but to all the men as a bearer of good news and as a warner, but most men do not know."[4]

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1. Refer to ***al-Rābiṭah al-ʿArabiyyah al-Miṣriyyah*** Magazine; Issue of Ṣafar and Rabīʿ al-Awwal, 1355 A.H.
2. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Baqarah (2:185).
3. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah Āl-ʿImrān (3:138).
4. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah Saba' (34:28).

﴿ تَبَارَكَ ٱلَّذِى نَزَّلَ ٱلْفُرْقَانَ عَلَىٰ عَبْدِهِۦ لِيَكُونَ لِلْعَٰلَمِينَ نَذِيرًا ﴾

"Blessed is He Who sent down the Furqān upon His servant that he may be a warner to the nations;"[1]

3. Transferring Islam's eternal message to the world is obligatory upon every Muslim. This obligation is explicitly defined within the Holy Qur'ān itself.

﴿ وَكَذَٰلِكَ جَعَلْنَٰكُمْ أُمَّةً وَسَطًا لِّتَكُونُوا۟ شُهَدَآءَ عَلَى ٱلنَّاسِ وَيَكُونَ ٱلرَّسُولُ عَلَيْكُمْ شَهِيدًا ۗ وَمَا جَعَلْنَا ٱلْقِبْلَةَ ٱلَّتِى كُنتَ عَلَيْهَآ إِلَّا لِنَعْلَمَ مَن يَتَّبِعُ ٱلرَّسُولَ مِمَّن يَنقَلِبُ عَلَىٰ عَقِبَيْهِ ۚ وَإِن كَانَتْ لَكَبِيرَةً إِلَّا عَلَى ٱلَّذِينَ هَدَى ٱللَّهُ ۗ وَمَا كَانَ ٱللَّهُ لِيُضِيعَ إِيمَٰنَكُمْ ۚ إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ بِٱلنَّاسِ لَرَءُوفٌ رَّحِيمٌ ﴾

"And thus We have made you a middle (just) nation that you may be the witnesses for the people and (that) the Apostle may be a witness over you. And, We did not make that which you would have as the qiblah, but that We might distinguish him who follows the Apostle from him who turns back upon his heels. And, this was surely hard except for those whom Allah had guided aright; and Allah was not going to make your faith fruitless. Most surely, Allah is Affectionate, Merciful to the people."[2]

﴿ بِٱلْبَيِّنَٰتِ وَٱلزُّبُرِ ۗ وَأَنزَلْنَآ إِلَيْكَ ٱلذِّكْرَ لِتُبَيِّنَ لِلنَّاسِ مَا نُزِّلَ إِلَيْهِمْ وَلَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ ﴾

"With clear arguments and scriptures; and We have revealed to you the Reminder that you may make clear to men what has been revealed to them, and that haply they may reflect."[3]

4. The real purpose behind the Qur'ān's revelation was that it be understood by all of humanity. It was never meant to be the exclusive property of one particular group, nor was the mere recitation of its Arabic text the purpose behind its descent. The Qur'ān is for all people, and all nations have a right to comprehend its divine contents.

1. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Furqān (25:1).
2. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Baqarah (2:143).
3. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Naḥl (16:44).

﴿ قُلۡ أَيُّ شَيۡءٍ أَكۡبَرُ شَهَٰدَةٗۖ قُلِ ٱللَّهُۖ شَهِيدُۢ بَيۡنِي وَبَيۡنَكُمۡۚ وَأُوحِيَ إِلَيَّ هَٰذَا ٱلۡقُرۡءَانُ لِأُنذِرَكُم بِهِۦ وَمَنۢ بَلَغَۚ أَئِنَّكُمۡ لَتَشۡهَدُونَ أَنَّ مَعَ ٱللَّهِ ءَالِهَةً أُخۡرَىٰۚ قُل لَّآ أَشۡهَدُۚ قُلۡ إِنَّمَا هُوَ إِلَٰهٞ وَٰحِدٞ وَإِنَّنِي بَرِيٓءٞ مِّمَّا تُشۡرِكُونَ ﴾

"Say: What thing is the weightiest in testimony? Say: Allah is witness between you and me; and this Qur'ān has been revealed to me that with it I may warn you and whomsoever it reaches. Do you really bear witness that there are other gods with Allah? Say: I do not bear witness. Say: He is only one Allah, and surely I am clear of that which you set up (with Him)."[1]

﴿ إِنَّ ٱلَّذِينَ يَكۡتُمُونَ مَآ أَنزَلۡنَا مِنَ ٱلۡبَيِّنَٰتِ وَٱلۡهُدَىٰ مِنۢ بَعۡدِ مَا بَيَّنَّٰهُ لِلنَّاسِ فِي ٱلۡكِتَٰبِ أُوْلَٰٓئِكَ يَلۡعَنُهُمُ ٱللَّهُ وَيَلۡعَنُهُمُ ٱللَّٰعِنُونَ ﴾

"Surely those who conceal the clear proofs and the guidance that We revealed after We made it clear in the Book for men, these it is whom Allah shall curse, and those who curse shall curse them (too)."[2]

The History of Qur'ānic Translations

It has already been mentioned that the Holy Prophet (ṣ) allowed Salmān the Persian to translate Sūrah al-Fātiḥah into Persian, so that he could teach this translation to a group of Iranians residing within the Arabian Peninsula. This practice became a norm during the Holy Prophet's time. Various companions would translate portions of the Holy Qur'ān for newly converted Muslims of non-Arab origins, in order to make Islamic teaching more accessible to them.

During the first migration, wherein Muslims were sent to seek refuge in Abyssinia, Jaʿfar ibn Abī-Ṭālib translated a portion of Sūrah Maryam for the Abyssinian king al-Najāshī and his court. This translation left a deep mark in their souls and, as a result, they became convinced of Islam's truthfulness and divine origins. Ṣadr al-Afāḍil, a renowned researcher and teacher, believes that Jaʿfar ibn Abī-Ṭālib knew the Abyssinian language and was, therefore, able to translate the said Qur'ānic verses into the tongue spoken by his hosts. Obviously, a recitation of the said verses in Arabic would have been unintelligible for the king, and consequently, their contents could not have influenced him. However, when a translation of the said Qur'ānic text was presented to the Abyssinian monarch, he became greatly influenced and

1. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Anʿām (6:19).
2. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Baqarah (2;159).

declared, "By God! The words of Muḥammad are no different from the words of the Messiah." Having said this, al-Najāshī uncontrollably broke out into tears.

In the years 230 A.H. Raja Raik Mahrook, the ruler of a state called Roor in India, requested ʿAbdullāh ibn ʿUmar ibn ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz, the caliph's representative within this Indian state, to translate the Qur'ān into the Indian language. He also requested ʿAbdullāh to explain to him the Holy Qur'ān's exegesis. This task was carried out by an expert scribe. The translator says, "During the translation and exegesis of Sūrah Yāsīn, we reached the following verse:

﴿ وَضَرَبَ لَنَا مَثَلًا وَنَسِيَ خَلْقَهُۥ ۖ قَالَ مَن يُحْيِ ٱلْعِظَٰمَ وَهِيَ رَمِيمٌ ﴿٧٨﴾ قُلْ يُحْيِيهَا ٱلَّذِيٓ أَنشَأَهَآ أَوَّلَ مَرَّةٍ ۖ وَهُوَ بِكُلِّ خَلْقٍ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٧٩﴾ ﴾

"And he strikes out a likeness for Us and forgets his own creation. Says he: Who will give life to the bones when they are rotten? Say: He will give life to them Who brought them into existence at first, and He is cognizant of all creation."[1]

I translated this verse into Sanskrit, and upon hearing this translation, the king fell down from his throne and onto the floor. He wept profusely until his face, and the ground beneath, had both become inundated with tears. Finally, the Raja cried out, 'This God is a deity with no parallel, and there exists no other like Him'." The Raja had already converted to Islam secretly and used to pray and supplicate to God in his private chambers.[2]

During the reign of Sultan Manṣūr ibn Nūḥ al-Samānī (350-365 A.H.), the scholars of Transoceania were ordered to prepare a translation for the Holy Qur'ān in ancient Persian. These scholars in question used the exegesis sent to the king by Muḥammad ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī (deceased 310 A.H.) as a mould or framework while translating the Holy Qur'ān. In the preface, written upon this particular translation, we find the following text:

This book is a grand exegesis as narrated by Muḥammad ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī. It has been translated into the ancient Persian language. When brought here from Baghdad it consisted of forty volumes. This book was originally written in the Arabic language and was brought to the righteous and victorious king, Abū-Ṣāliḥ Manṣūr ibn Nūḥ ibn Naṣr ibn Aḥmad ibn Ismāʿīl. As a result, the king found it difficult to read this book and was faced with problems in understanding its Arabic text. Therefore, he ordered that it be

1. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah Yāsīn (36:78-79).
2. ***Ṣadr al-Afāḍil***; an article issued in ***al-Tawḥīd*** Magazine, Issue no. 9, pg. 216. Also refer to: Rāmhurmuzī Buzorg ibn Shahryār*; ʿAjā'ib al-Hind;* 1883 C.E.

translated into Persian. He gathered the scholars of Transoceania and commanded that the said book be made available in Persian so that it could be read and understood by all those who do not know the Arabic language. As God the All-Mighty says:

﴿وَمَآ أَرۡسَلۡنَا مِن رَّسُولٍ إِلَّا بِلِسَانِ قَوۡمِهِۦ لِيُبَيِّنَ لَهُمۡۖ فَيُضِلُّ ٱللَّهُ مَن يَشَآءُ وَيَهۡدِي مَن يَشَآءُ وَهُوَ ٱلۡعَزِيزُ ٱلۡحَكِيمُ﴾

"And We did not send any apostle but with the language of his people, so that he might explain to them clearly; then Allah makes whom He pleases err and He guides whom He pleases and He is the Mighty, the Wise."[1]

The language is Persian in this land and its kings are non-Arabs…

Thus, the victorious king Abū-Ṣāliḥ commanded that the scholars of Transoceania be gathered together. From the city of Bukhārā came jurisprudents like Abū-Bakr ibn Aḥmad ibn Ḥāmid and al-Khalīl ibn Aḥmad al-Sajistānī. From the city of Balkh there came Abū-Jaʿfar ibn Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī. From Bāb al-Hind (the Gates of India) al-Ḥasan ibn ʿAlī Mandūs and Abū'l-Jahm Khālid ibn Hāni' al-Mutafaqqih were summoned. Similarly, scholars were called from Samarqand and all other cities of Transoceania. They were all given individual lines of action so that this book could be translated into Persian. Then the victorious king Abū-Ṣāliḥ ordered this group to choose from within itself a person more learned than the others. Henceforth, they translated the said book.

The methodology used in this translation is such that the actual Arabic text is given precedence, whereas the Persian translation of the Qur'ān and its exegesis (written by al-Ṭabarī) follow afterwards.

There also exists another Persian translation of the Holy Qur'ān produced by a Ḥanafī jurisprudent who lived within Transoceania. This translation was prepared by Abū-Ḥafṣ Najm al-Dīn ʿUmar ibn Muḥammad Nasfā (462-538 A.H.), and included an exegesis of the Holy Qur'ān penned by the same author. The sequence within this book is such that its author first translates a given verse and then goes on to provide an explanation for it. This work is not the same as the famous *Tafsīr Nasfā* written by Abū'l-Barakāt ʿAbdullāh ibn Aḥmad ibn Maḥmūd Nasfā.

The largest and most complete Persian exegesis of the Holy Qur'ān was penned by Shaykh Jamāl al-Dīn Abū'l-Futūḥ, Ḥusayn ibn ʿAlī ibn Muḥammad al-Rāzī. He was a famous scholar and academic who lived

1. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah Ibrāhīm (14:4).

during the 6th century of Hegira and his family resided in Nayshābūr. This particular exegesis is truly voluminous in nature. Within this work, the author first translates Qur'ānic verses using a verbatim translational style, and subsequently, adds an exegesis in explanation of each translated verse. Islamic scholars and academics have always held this invaluable tome in high regard.

Niẓām al-Dīn Ḥusayn ibn Muḥammad al-Qummī al-Nayshābūrī (deceased 728 A.H.) is the author of an Arabic language exegesis upon the Holy Qur'ān called *Gharā'ib al-Qur'ān wa-Raghā'ib al-Furqān*. In this work, the author translated the Qur'ānic verses into Persian, but the exposition that followed was written in Arabic. The said tome is famously known as *Tafsīr al-Nayshābūrī*, and it includes both an exoteric exegesis and an esoteric one. The author's style has rendered this exegesis unique in its subtlety. This important exposition of the Holy Qur'ān has been printed in Egypt with the Persian translation removed. However, copies that were printed earlier, in India and Iran, include the original Persian text.

An Analysis of Qur'ānic Translations

Before we analyze the available translations of the Holy Qur'ān for their strengths and weaknesses, we must first discuss the standards that any such translation is required to fulfill. Once outlined, these standards can act as guidelines for us in our scrutiny of any given Qur'ānic translation. We have divided these criteria into two sections to discuss them separately. The first section elucidates standards applicable to the translation itself, whereas the second pertains to standards that a translator must fulfill.

Standards for a Translation

As we mentioned before, translation represents the transfer of a given meaning, with all its connotative and denotative intricacies, from one language to another. The greater the complexity of a given text, the higher the degree of care needed in translating it. However, if the text in question be the handiwork of the Creator, sent as a source of eternal guidance for man, its translation must be carried out with the utmost degree of caution and accuracy. In addition, this translation must be kept pure from all kinds of pollutants, chief amongst them being a translator's personal opinions and whimsical inferences.

From this perspective, a translation of the Holy Qur'ān must abide by the following principles:

1. A translation must convey, with an absolute commitment to precision, all the literal meanings of a verse, including its denotative and connotative significations. However, meanings derived inferentially from the said verse's

text are to be ignored, since such semantic dimensions are to be explored within exegeses.

2. A translation must put into use the nearest semantic counterparts of words present in the original text. It must also choose a suitable framework within the target language. By placing the first within the mould provided by the second, the said translation must be able to transfer the source's meaning in its entirety. If the need arises for a translation to incorporate additional words or terminology, these additional elements are to be used in accordance to the previously defined framework.

3. Any translation of the Holy Qur'ān must be carried out under the supervision of a committee of religious experts consisting of specialists from different fields of religious learning. Such supervision would keep the given translation safe from errors and divergence.

4. The detached syllables found in the beginning of certain Qur'ānic chapters are to be incorporated into a translation without change. Similarly, words meant to be ambiguous are to be incorporated as they are, without being translated. Such words include the word *burhān* (برهان) in verse 24 of Sūrah Yūsuf, or the word *dābbah* (دابّة) in verse 82 of Sūrah al-Naml, or the word *aʿrāf* (أعراف) in verse 46 of Sūrah al-Aʿrāf. A translation must strictly refrain from carving out explanations for such words.

5. It is important to abstain from the usage of academic and technical jargon while translating Qur'ānic verses. Translations are meant to be used by the public; therefore, any inclusion of such words would limit a translation's comprehensibility. In addition, translations should not dwell into listing the varying opinions of different scholars regarding Qur'ānic words or verses.

6. It is preferable that any translation of the Holy Qur'ān be carried out by a group, comprised of specialists from different fields, rather than separate individuals. In such an arrangement, each member of the said group can choose a portion of the Holy Qur'ān that matches his own particular specialization and interest.

7. A translation must always be accompanied by the original Arabic text of the Holy Qur'ān. In this manner, a reader faced by doubts about a given translation can readily refer back to the original Qur'ānic text. Additionally, this condition also renders irrelevant the fears expressed by certain individuals about the actual Qur'ān being replaced by its translations.

Conditions for a Translator

1. The translator must be an expert in both the source and the target languages.

2. The translator's religious knowledge must be of a degree that renders him capable of referring to various credible exegeses of the Holy Qur'ān. In turn, he must not solely rely on his own understanding of a given verse (but should definitely refer to what credible exegetes have said in explanation of it).

3. The translator must set himself free of all internal motivations, preconceptions and prejudices. In doing so, he must focus exclusively on what the Qur'ānic verse seeks to convey, regardless of what his own beliefs maybe.

4. Individuals, deficient in the strict qualifications required of someone seeking to translate the Holy Qur'ān, must refrain from indulging in this tremendous and painstaking task. In addition, competent persons who occupy offices of authority should actively overview all Qur'ānic translations produced within their respective spheres of influence and supervision.

Having listed these necessary conditions, we begin to see why translations prepared by persons acting individually are often littered with flaws and shortcomings. In fact, the idea that one person might be able to satisfy all these said conditions, is quite improbable to say the least. This is especially true when the said person seeks to translate the very word of God, a text that represents limitless knowledge spawned of God's own infinite nature. As a result, when compared to these said criteria, all translations prepared for the Holy Qur'ān to date, bear few strengths and numerous weaknesses.

Henceforth, we shall begin our analysis of some of these translations. It must be noted that our criticism of the imperfections found in these works is not due to cavillous intent, nor do we seek to negate the pains taken by these authors in their sincere efforts towards propagating Islam's divine doctrine. Rather, it is our belief that in order to reduce the percentage of such imperfections, translating the Holy Qur'ān must become a task carried out by specialist groups and not isolated individuals.

✔ Badr al-Dīn al-Zarkashī, the most renowned authority in the field of Qur'ānic studies, and Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī, the famous expert of Arabic grammar and literature, both believe that the word *hudnā* (هُدنا), occurring in verse 156 of Sūrah al-Aʿrāf, is a verb derived from the root *hadā-yahdī*[1] (هدى - يَهدي).[2]

1. In Arabic morphology, the root form of a verb is represented in this manner. The first word, from amongst these two, signifies the said verb's third person singular past tense, whereas the second indicates its third person singular present tense.
2. Al-Zarkashī mentions 17 meanings for the word *hadā* (هُدًى). One of these meanings is "Repentance."

﴿ وَٱكۡتُبۡ لَنَا فِي هَٰذِهِ ٱلدُّنۡيَا حَسَنَةٗ وَفِي ٱلۡأٓخِرَةِ إِنَّا هُدۡنَآ إِلَيۡكَۚ قَالَ عَذَابِيٓ أُصِيبُ بِهِۦ مَنۡ أَشَآءُۖ وَرَحۡمَتِي وَسِعَتۡ كُلَّ شَيۡءٖۚ فَسَأَكۡتُبُهَا لِلَّذِينَ يَتَّقُونَ وَيُؤۡتُونَ ٱلزَّكَوٰةَ وَٱلَّذِينَ هُم بِـَٔايَٰتِنَا يُؤۡمِنُونَ ﴾

"And ordain for us good in this world's life and in the hereafter, for surely we turn to Thee. He said: (As for) My chastisement, I will afflict with it whom I please, and My mercy encompasses all things; so I will ordain it (specially) for those who guard (against evil) and pay the poor-rate, and those who believe in Our communications."[1]

However, on closer observation it becomes clear that the first person plural tense for this particular root is *hadaynā* (هَدَيْنا) and not *hudnā* (هُدنا).

The word *hudnā* (هُدنا), on the other hand, is similar to *qunlā* (قُلنا) and must, therefore, be derived from the root *hāda-yahūdu* (هاد - يَهود), similar to *qāla-yaqūlu* (قال - يقول). The verb *hāda-yahūdu* (هاد - يهود) means to turn back or return. In this particular verse, the verb *hudnā* (هُدنا) means "we return," in terms of humanity returning to God on the Day of Resurrection.

Al-Zamakhsharī says, "The word *hudnā* (هُدنا) is derived from the root form *hāda-yahūdu* (هاد - يَهود)."[2]

Al-Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī comments, "The infinitive tense *hawd* (هَوْد) signifies a return to pliability and ease. The word *tahwīd* (تهويد), derived from the same root, means "walking softly and with ease like the gait of an ant." Popularly, the word also signifies repentance and returning towards God. So, when the Holy Qur'ān says, "انّا هُدنا اليك" (Surely we return towards You) it is the same as saying "تُبنا" (We repent)." [3]

✔ Al-Rāghib, with his absolute command over Arabic grammar and philology, lists the following verse under the root word *ʿanat* (عنَت) within his book *al-Mufradāt*.

﴿ وَعَنَتِ ٱلۡوُجُوهُ لِلۡحَيِّ ٱلۡقَيُّومِۖ وَقَدۡ خَابَ مَنۡ حَمَلَ ظُلۡمٗا ﴾

"And the faces shall be humbled before the Living, the Self-subsistent Allah, and he who bears iniquity is indeed a failure."[4]

1. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Aʿrāf (7:156).
2. ***Al-Kashshāf***, vol. 2, pg. 165.
3. *Al-Mufradāt,* pg. 546.
4. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah Ṭā-Hā (20:111).

According to al-Rāghib, the word *ʿanat* (عَنَتْ), in this verse, means: "suffered abject hardship." However, the said scholar seems to have made a mistake in this particular case. In reality, this word is derived from the root form *ʿaniya* (عَنِی) meaning "rendered servile" or "forced into subservience." Al-Ṭabarsī, while discussing this particular verse, writes:

"(The Qur'ān uses the word *ʿanat*) meaning 'became humble and without honor', like the humility of a prisoner caused by he who subjugates him."[1]

Stranger still is that al-Rāghib goes on to list the same verse under the root *ʿaniya* (عَنِی) as well.[2]

✔ The contemporary academic Elāhī Qamashahī, while translating verse 27 of Sūrah, translates the first portion of this verse as such:

"Then Maryam's tribe came to her, wishing to take her away with themselves…"

The actual verse, and its correct translation, is as follows:

﴿ فَأَتَتْ بِهِۦ قَوْمَهَا تَحْمِلُهُۥ ۖ قَالُوا۟ يَـٰمَرْيَمُ لَقَدْ جِئْتِ شَيْـًٔا فَرِيًّا ﴾

"And she came to her people with him, carrying him (with her). They said: O Maryam! Surely you have done a strange thing."[3]

Similarly, while translating verse 117 of Sūrah al-Mā'idah, Qamashahī takes the word *kuntu* (كنتُ) to mean "you were," whereas the word actually means "I was." As a result, he translates the said verse as such:

"You (God) were, yourself, a witness upon their actions, as long as I (the prophet Isa) was amongst them."

The verse and its correct translation are as follows:

﴿ وَكُنتُ عَلَيْهِمْ شَهِيدًا مَّا دُمْتُ فِيهِمْ ۖ فَلَمَّا تَوَفَّيْتَنِى كُنتَ أَنتَ ٱلرَّقِيبَ عَلَيْهِمْ ۚ وَأَنتَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَىْءٍ شَهِيدٌ ﴾

"...and I was a witness of them so long as I was among them, but when Thou didst cause me to die, Thou wert the watcher over them, and Thou art witness of all things." [4]

1. ***Tafsīr al-Ṭabarsī***, vol. 7, pg. 31.
2. ***Al-Mufradāt,*** pg. 349-350.
3. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah Maryam (19:27).
4. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Mā'idah (5:117).

God is a witness over human actions at all times. His supervision was not limited to the time when prophet *Isa* lived among the people.

Likewise, while translating verse 25 and 26 of Sūrah al-Fajr, the respected translator has deemed the verbs *lā-yuʿadhdhibu* (لا يُعَذّبُ) and *lā-yūthiqu* (لا يُوثِق) to be passive tense verbs. As a result, he has translated the said verses as such:

"On that day, the punishment of the blasphemer will be such that none have ever suffered such a penalty. And no one shall be bound like the binding of a blasphemer.

However, in reality, both the said verbs are active verbs and, therefore, the actual verse and its correct meanings are as follows:

﴿ فَيَوْمَئِذٍ لَّا يُعَذِّبُ عَذَابَهُۥٓ أَحَدٌ ﴿٢٥﴾ وَلَا يُوثِقُ وَثَاقَهُۥٓ أَحَدٌ ﴾

"But on that day shall no one chastise with (anything like) His chastisement, And no one shall bind with (anything like) His binding."[1]

Muḥammad Bāqir Bahbūdī, with all the meticulous care that characterizes his translational and exegetic work, has also fallen prey to numerous errors and shortcomings. One such mistake is seen within his translation of verse 187 of Sūrah al-Baqarah. The esteemed translator has translated a portion of this verse as follows:

"...Until the white thread becomes distinct from the black thread, due to the light of dawn..."

The translator has taken the word *khayṭ* (خيط) to mean "thread," according to its literal meaning. However, in this particular verse, the word has been used metaphorically and its literal meaning is clearly not applicable. The same mistake was made by one of the Prophet's companions. He would place two pieces of thread, one white and the other black, under his pillow at night. When morning would become imminent, he would periodically look at these threads to see whether they had become distinguishable from one another. Having failed at his task, he came to the Holy Prophet (ṣ) and narrated for him his ordeal. The Holy Prophet (ṣ) smiled compassionately and said, "You have misunderstood. The verse actually intends to speak of the twilight at dawn, when it becomes distinct from the night's darkness."[2]

The same translator has translated a portion of verse 58 of Sūrah Āl-ʿImrān as follows:

1. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Fajr (89:25-26).
2. Refer to: ***Tafsīr al-Ṭabarsī***, vol. 1, pg. 281.

"...and a reminder of the Qur'ān is sagacious"

He has mistakenly taken the word *ḥakīm* (حكيم), used within the said verse as a trait for the Holy Qur'ān, to mean "sagacious." If used for a person, the same word would have indeed signified the said meaning, but herein the given word has been used in relation to a book. In such a case, the correct meaning of the word *ḥakīm* (حكيم) is "steadfast and well grounded" or "consisting of content that characterizes wisdom." The correct translation would be as follows:

﴿ ذَٰلِكَ نَتۡلُوهُ عَلَيۡكَ مِنَ ٱلۡأٓيَٰتِ وَٱلذِّكۡرِ ٱلۡحَكِيمِ ﴾

"This is what we rehearse unto thee of the Signs and the Message of Wisdom."[1]

While translating verse 7 of Sūrah al-Zalzalah, the respected translator has taken the phrase *mithqāla dharratin* (مثقال ذرّةٍ) to mean "the weight of an ant." In reality, the said phrase is used to indicate minute particles of dust, which float around in the atmosphere and become visible only when sunlight falls upon them. These miniscule particles are almost entirely weightless. The correct translation is as follows:

﴿ فَمَن يَعۡمَلۡ مِثۡقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ خَيۡرٗا يَرَهُۥ ﴾

"So, he who has done an atom's weight of good shall see it." [2]

Similarly, the said translator translates verse 1 of Sūrah al-Maʿārij as follows:

"The flowing liquid with the chastisement that shall befall"

He has understood the phrase *sa'ala sā'ilun* (سأل سائلٌ) to be *sāla sā'ilun* (سال سائلٌ) meaning "flowing liquid." He has chosen to translate the given phrase according to a recitation other than that of Ḥafṣ. However, the change seen in this other recitation represents a mere oral mitigation and not a semantic one. The meaning of the phrase remains the same in both recitational styles.[3] Therefore, the correct translation is the one that follows:

1. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah Āl-ʿImrān (3:58).
2. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Zalzalah (99:7).
3. An article by Husain Ustād Wali; ***Faṣlnāmeh Mutarjim***; Issue. 10, Summer 1372, pg. 112-114.

﴿سَأَلَ سَآئِلٌۢ بِعَذَابٍ وَاقِعٍ﴾

"One demanding, demanded the chastisement which must befall"[1]

✔ There also exist errors in the translation of the Holy Qur'ān carried out by Abū'l-Qāsim Payandeh. In translating verse 132 of Sūrah al-Baqarah, he writes:

"And Ibrāhīm enjoined the faith upon his sons and upon Yaʿqūb, saying: O' my children, God has chosen for you (this) religion…"

The translator has mistakenly taken the word *yaʿqūb* (یعقوب) as connected to the word *banīhi* (بنیه), the latter occurring before the first in the said verse. However, in reality the word *yaʿqūb* (یعقوب) is connected to the word *ibrāhīm* (ابراهیم) and carries a nominative case inflexion. The correct translation is as follows:

﴿ وَوَصَّىٰ بِهَآ إِبۡرَٰهِـۧمُ بَنِيهِ وَيَعۡقُوبُ يَٰبَنِيَّ إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ ٱصۡطَفَىٰ لَكُمُ ٱلدِّينَ فَلَا تَمُوتُنَّ إِلَّا وَأَنتُم

مُّسۡلِمُونَ ﴾

"*And the same did Ibrāhīm enjoin on his sons and (so did) Yaʿqūb. O my sons! Surely Allah has chosen for you (this) faith, therefore die not unless you are Muslims."*[2]

Likewise, in translating a portion of verse 164 within the same chapter, the respected translator writes:

"…the distinction between night and day..."

In actuality, the verse seeks to indicate the coming and going of night and day as they continuously trail one another.[3] The verse uses the word *ikhtilāf* (اختلاف) which means "to follow behind one another," or "to succeed directly after one another. The said word is derived from the root *kh-l-f* (خلف) and not from the root *khilāf* (خلاف), wherein the second of the two means "distinction" or "differentiation." The translator in question has mistakenly translated the given word according to the latter of these two root forms.

In the table below, we shall present a list of Persian translators of the Holy Qur'ān along with their respective translational styles.[4]

1. The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Maʿārij (70:1).
2 The Holy Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Baqarah (2:132).
3. An article by Sayyid Muḥammad Farzān; ***Faṣlnāmeh Mutarjim;*** Issue. 10, Summer 1372, pg. 156-157.
4. Refer to: ***Payām Qur'ān*** Magazine, pg. 44-45.

	TRANSLATOR	***TRANSLATION TYPE***
1.	Shah Waliyullāh Dehlawi	Ancient Persian. Precise and verbatim
2.	Iʿtimād al-Salṭanah	Verbatim
3.	Baṣīr al-Mulk	In strict conformation, under the supervision of ʿAlī Qamashahī
4.	Mahdī ʿAlī Qamashahī	Exegetic, this is the most popular Persian translation in use today
5.	Abū'l-Qāsim Payandeh	Translations of verses have been taken into consideration
6.	Muḥammad Kāẓim Muʿizzī	Verbatim
7.	Maḥmūd Yāsirī	Exegetic
8.	ʿAbbās Miṣbāḥzādeh	Derived from translations carried out during the age of the Qajar and from the exegesis of Abū'l-Futūḥ
9.	ʿAlī Naqī Faiḍ al-Islām	Exegetic, somewhat research orientated
10.	Riḍā Sirāj	Exegetic, this translation is well researched
11.	Jamāl al-Dīn Istrābādī	Verbatim, along with some minor explanations
12.	Ḥusayn ʿImādzādeh	Exegetic
13.	Ḥikmat Āl-Āghā	In strict conformation, derived from the translation of Qamashahī and the exegesis of Abū'l-Futūḥ
14.	Zayn al-ʿĀbidīn Rāhnumā	Corresponding, along with explanation, almost an accurate translation
15.	Asadullāh Muṣṭafawī	Exegetic
16.	Dāriūsh Shāhīn	Strictly conformant and precise
17.	ʿAbd Muḥammad Ātī	Strictly conformant, with some explanations
18.	Jalāl al-Dīn Fārsī	Strictly conformant
19.	Muḥammad Bāqir Bahbūdī	Exegetic
20.	Muḥammad Khājwi	Derived from older translations
21.	Abū'l-Qāsim Imāmī	A translation carried out in classical style
22.	Aḥmad Kāwyānpūr	Derived from the exegeses of Abū'l-Futūḥ and *Kashf al-Ḥaqā'iq*
23.	Jalāl al-Dīn Mujtabawī	Strictly conformant, with explanations
24.	Kāẓim Pūrjawādī	Strictly conformant
25.	Dār al-Qur'ān al-Karīm (A group of translators)	
26.	Nāṣir Makārim Shīrāzī	Derived from the exegesis *Tafsīr-e-Namūneh*
27.	Bahā' al-Dīn Khurramshāhī	With footnotes and explanations
28	Mahdī Fūlādwand	Strictly conformant and precise

Translation of the Holy Qur'ān into non-Persian Languages

The Holy Qur'ān, due to its grand and lofty position, has grabbed the attention of world nations. However, in the absence of a universal comprehension of the Arabic language, and the unavailability of Arabic tutelage for a majority of the world's population, translators have set out to translate this divine document into numerous languages spoken by various different nationalities. To date, the Holy Qur'ān has been translated into over sixty-five major languages of the world.[1] Some of these translations have been re-printed tens or even hundreds of times. Apart from the translations of the Holy Qur'ān published in German, Italian, French, Turkish, Urdu, Chinese and other world languages, three hundred different translations have reached publication in the English language alone. From amongst these English translations of the Holy Qur'ān, the translation by George Seal has been re-printed over forty times.

However, it is not possible for us to assume that all these various translators acted with absolute integrity. The prejudice and ill intent of some of these translators is indeed extremely evident. They have harbored within themselves grave bigotry in opposition to Islam, the Muslims and the Holy Qur'ān, and have undertaken to translate this sacred book with the same skewed mentality. On the other hand, several other translators have committed mistakes and errors unintentionally. These errors have surfaced due to the fact that these translators lacked a satisfactory degree of competence needed for translating the Holy Qur'ān. In fact, an absence of proper expert supervision can be deemed the real reason behind such accidental shortcomings. Nevertheless, the negative effects caused by such unpremeditated errors are no less than those caused by intentional ones. Both lead to a distorted image of Islam being presented to the reader. This, in itself, is tantamount to a severe tragedy. The results caused by such mistakes herald great impacts for the Islamic world.

Therefore, ignoring such blunders is totally unjustifiable, especially when maliciousness and conspiratorial intent is seen to be involved. Officials occupying positions of authority are responsible for rectifying this situation. As an example, we can point towards the Syriac translation of the Holy Qur'ān carried out by *Maṭrān* (Dionysius) or Jacob bar-Salibi (Jacob the son of Salibi), a high ranking member of the church's hierarchy. This translation, which was re-published in 1925, was clearly prepared in bad faith.

Abū-ʿAbdullāh al-Zanjānī writes, "Probably the first translation of the Holy

1. ***Ismat Binark, Khaldaraan; "Kitaab Shinasi-e- Jahani Tarjumaha wa Tafsīrha-e-Qur'ān-e-Majeed"***; Translated by Muhammad Aasif Fakrat, The Razavi Sacred Shrine's Research Centre, 1373, pg. 58.

Qur'ān in Latin (the language of European academia at that time) was carried out in 1143 C.E. This translation was the work of Ketton (Robert of Ketton/Robertus Ketenensis), with the assistance of Herman of Carinthia (Sclavus Dalmata/Secundus), Peter of Toledo and a scholar of Arabian descent. The said work was carried out on the orders to Peter, the Abbot of Cluny. The purpose and intent behind this translation was to pave the way towards a refutation of the Holy Qur'ān. In the year 1594 C.E. Hincklemann published another translation of the Holy Qur'ān. Subsequently, in the year 1598 C.E. Marracci published yet another translation of the sacred text, along with its refutation."[1]

Based on what we have discussed regarding the many flawed translations of the Holy Qur'ān available today, scholars of Qur'ānic sciences and experts of Islamic studies are responsible for making available correct and authentic translations in order to replace these faulty texts.

In the end, we present for the reader a summary of translations prepared for the Holy Qur'ān.

S/N	***LANGUAGE***	***NUMBER***	***TRANSLATOR AND THE NUMBER OF EDITIONS PRINTED***	***REMARKS***
1.	Asaami	1	–	–
2.	Afrikaans	2	–	–
3.	Albanian	–	–	–
4.	German	65	Ludwig Ullmann (16 Editions) Rudi Paret (11 Editions) Max Henning (12 Editions) S. Schweigger (4 Editions)	– – – –
5.	Urdu	300	Rafi Al-Din Dihlawi (30 Editions) Abd Al-Qadir Dehlawi (22 Editions)	– –
6.	Armenian	3	Abraham Amirchanjanz (2 Editions)	–
7.	Spanish	31	Anonymous (7 Editions) Juan Vernet (4 Editions) Hernandez Cata (3 Editions)	– – –
8.	Esperanto	2	–	In Latin script
9.	Amharic	2	–	Spoken in some areas of Africa, and bearing a unique textual style
10.	Indonesian	39	Aḥmad Hassan (9 Editions) Maḥmud Yūnus (9 Editions) Muḥammad Hasbi Ashshiddiegy (6 Editions)	

1. ***Tārīkh al-Qur'ān***, pg. 69.

11.	English	295	George Seal (105 Editions) Rodwell (32 Editions) Pickthall (24 Editions) Palmer (15 Editions) Arberry (40 Editions) Yūsuf ʿAbdullāh (50 Editions) Shakir (30 Editions)	Sunni Muslim translator Christian translator Sunni Muslim translator Shīʿah Muslim translator
12.	Italian	20	Luigi Bonelli (6 Editions)	
13.	Brahui	1	–	Sunni Muslim translator
14.	Burmese	1	–	Shīʿah Muslim translator
15.	Bulgarian	1	–	
16.	Balochi	1	–	A translation of the Persian translation of Dehlawi
17.	Bengali	39	Girish Chandra Sen (7 Editions)	
18.	Buginese	1	–	
19.	Portuguese	8	Bento de Castro (6 Editions)	In Latin script
20.	Pashto	14	Murad ʿAlī (4 Editions)	A translation of the Persian translation of Dehlawi
21.	Punjabi	15	Muḥammad Habibullah (6 Editions)	
22.	Tamil	12	Abd Al-Hamid Baqwi (5 Editions)	Arabic script and a unique script
23.	Thai	2	–	
24.	Turkish	107	Muḥammad el-Tefsiri Debbaghzade (11 Ed.) Ḥasan Basri Cantay (10 Editions) Fikri Yavuz (7 Editions)	These translations include all the different Turkish dialects and have been printed in Arabic, Cyrillic and Latin scripts
25.	Telugu	4	Chilkoori Narayana Rao (2 Editions)	
26.	Javanese	1		
27.	Czech	4	Aloin Richard Nykl (2 Editions)	In Latin script
28.	Chinese	1	–	
29.	Hausa	1	–	From Africa and in the Latin script
30.	Danish	5	Abdus Salam Sadiq Madsen (3 Editions)	
31.	Russian	16	K. Nikolayev (5 Editions) Gordii Semyonovich Sablukov (4 Editions)	
32.	Romanian	1		

33.	Japanese	9	Yasunari & Osamu Ikeda (2 Editions) Toshihiko Izutsu (2 Editions) Ken-ichi Sakamoto (2 Editions)	
34.	Sanskrit	2	–	A unique script
35	Syriac	–	–	
36.	Sindhi	24	Taj Mahmud Amruti	
37.	Swahili	5	ʿAbdullāh Saleh al-Farsy (12 Editions)	
38.	Swedish	4	Karl Vilhelm Zettersteen (2 Editions)	
39	Sudanese	1	–	In Arabic script
40.	Sinhalese	–	–	From Asia with a unique script
41.	Serbo-Croatian	11	Muḥammad Pandza & Dzemal al-Dīn Causevic	
42.	Hebrew	4	Joseph Joel Rivlin (2 Edition)	
43.	Persian	107	Shah Waliyullah Dehlawi (34 Editions) Mullah Husayn Kashifi (19 Editions)	Already discussed earlier
44.	French	116	Albert de Biberstein Kasimirski (29 Editions) Andre Du Ryer (22 Editions) Claude Etienne Savary (21 Editions)	
45.	Finnish	3	Jussi Aro, Armas Salonen & Knut Tallqvist	
46.	Creole	–	–	From Africa and in Latin script
47.	Kurdish	2	–	Unique script
48.	Korean	1	–	
49.	Kashmiri	2	–	Unique script
50.	Kannada	1	–	
51.	Guajarati	11	Aḥmad Bha'i & Sulayman Jamani (20 Editions)	
52.	Latin	5	Ketenensis, Rabetus & Hermannus Dalmata	
54.	Luganda	1	–	
55.	Polish	1	–	
56.	Macassar	–	–	From Oceania with a unique script
57.	Malayalam	14		From Asia with Arabic and Latin script
58.	Malay	14	Aḥmad Hassan (6 Edition)	
59.	Hungarian	2	–	
60.	Marathi	2	–	

61.	Meranao	–	–	From Asia with a special Arabic script
62.	Memoni	–	–	From Asia and in Arabic script
63.	Norwegian	1	–	
64.	Deutch	26	Jan Hendrik Glazemaker (8 Editions)	
65.	Hindi	6	–	
66.	Yoruba	4	M. S. Cole (2 Editions)	From Africa with Latin script
67..	Greek	8	Gerasimou I.Pentaki	

These statistics have been taken from the book *Kitābshenāsī-e-Tarjumehā ta sāl 1980"* (A World Bibliography of Translations of the Holy Qur'an, 1515-1980, Ismet Binark and Halit Eren, edited with an introduction by Ekmaleddin Ihsanoglu) and the book *Kitābshenāsī-e-Jahān* published by *Mu'ssase-Ihsanoglu*. Some of the translations printed after 1980 are, therefore, not included in the list. For a more complete list, please refer to the article "The Qur'ān and its translators" by ʿAlī Qulī Qara'i (also available on the internet).

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